October 2009
Conflict and Peace - I

THE ROAD TO WISDOM

Swami Vivekananda on
Religion and spirituality—Way to Peace

RELIGION is the greatest motive power for realising that infinite energy which is the birthright and nature of every man. In building up character, in making for everything that is good and great, in bringing peace to others and peace to one's own self, religion is the highest motive power and, therefore, ought to be studied from that standpoint. Religion must be studied on a broader basis than formerly. All narrow, limited, fighting ideas of religion have to go. All sect ideas and tribal or national ideas of religion must be given up. That each tribe or nation should have its own particular God and think that every other is wrong is a superstition that should belong to the past. All such ideas must be abandoned.

As the human mind broadens, its spiritual steps broaden too. The time has already come when a man cannot record a thought without its reaching to all corners of the earth; by merely physical means, we have come into touch with the whole world; so the future religions of the world have to become as universal, as wide.

Blessedness, eternal peace, arising from perfect freedom, is the highest concept of religion underlying all the ideas of God in Vedanta—absolutely free Existence, not bound by anything, no change, no nature, nothing that can produce a change in Him. This same freedom is in you and in me and is the only real freedom.

God is still, established upon His own majestic changeless Self. You and I try to be one with Him, but plant ourselves upon nature, upon the trifles of daily life, on money, on fame, on human love, and all these changing forms in nature which make for bondage. When nature shines, upon what depends the shining? Upon God and not upon the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars. Wherever anything shines, whether it is the light in the sun or in our own consciousness, it is He. He shining, all shines after Him.

The philosophy in the background is that each one projects his own ideal and worships that. This external world is only the world of suggestion. All that we see, we project out of our own minds... The wicked see this world as a perfect hell, and the good as a perfect heaven. Lovers see this world as full of love, and haters as full of hatred; fighters see nothing but strife, and the peaceful nothing but peace. The perfect man sees nothing but God. So we always worship our highest ideal, and when we have reached the point, when we love the ideal as the ideal, all arguments and doubts vanish for ever.

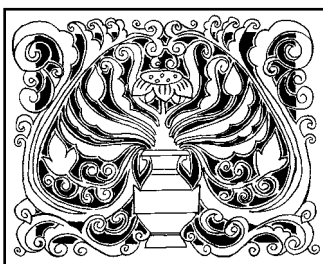From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.337; 2.49-50; 2.67

Vol. 114, No. 10
October 2009

Contents

Amrita Kalasha

Subscribe to Prabuddha Bharata

- Become a Patron Subscriber, and support the rich legacy left to all of us by Swami Vivekananda; Patrons' names are published in *Prabuddha Bharata*.
- *Prabuddha Bharata* subscribers receive 10% discount on all Advaita Ashrama Publications.
- Send remittances in favour of *Prabuddha Bharata* by bank draft or money order to Advaita Ashrama, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, India.
  Or, you can **subscribe online** at *www.advaitaashrama.org*.
- Please note that we do not accept cheques.

Subscription Rates

	India & Nepal	Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	USA & Canada	United Kingdom	European Union
Annual	Rs 100	Rs 1100	$ 30 (USD)	£ 18	€ 25
Three Years	Rs 280	Rs 3200	$ 85	£ 50	€ 70
Life (20 years)	Rs 1200	—	—	—	—
Patron (25 years)	Rs 2000	—	—	—	—

Online Subscription Rates · www.advaitaashrama.org

		India & Nepal	Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	USA & Canada
Annual	(USD)	$ 3	$ 28	$ 32
Three Years	(USD)	$ 7.5	$ 83	$ 90
Life (20 years)	(USD)	$ 30	—	—
Patron (25 years)	(USD)	$ 50	—	—

(Rates in foreign currencies depend on current exchange rates and are therefore subject to change without notice)

Information for Subscribers

- Moving to a new address? Please let our Kolkata office know at least a month in advance so that your copy moves too.
- The number on the top line of your address label is your subscription number: please quote this number when writing to us. The month and year on the same line is the last month of your subscription.
- Subscriber copies are dispatched on the first or second day of every month. If you do not receive your copy by the last week of the month, please let us know, so we can send another copy.
- Renew your subscription online, at our website.

Information for Contributors

- Unpublished original articles of universal and higher human interests pertaining to religion, spirituality, philosophy, psychology, education, values, and other social topics coming from competent writers of any country are considered for publication in *Prabuddha Bharata*.
- Articles should not exceed 3,500 words. Paucity of space precludes acceptance of longer articles for publication, except in rare cases. Articles must be submitted in typed—and preferably electronic—form.
- For all quotations in articles, adequate references—including name of author, title/publication, publisher with address, year of publication, and page number(s)—should be provided. Internet references should include name of author, website publisher, date, and *full* URL.
- The Editor does not accept responsibility for views expressed in any articles.
- Unsolicited articles are not individually acknowledged. The Editor will contact the contributor if an article is taken up for publication. E-mail addresses should be furnished where possible.
- The Editor reserves the right to accept, reject, or effect necessary changes in articles on which no correspondence is possible.
- *Prabuddha Bharata* does not undertake to return unsolicited materials.
- Articles published in *Prabuddha Bharata* cannot be reproduced elsewhere without written permission from the Managing Editor.

You know

how important *Prabuddha Bharata* is

in spreading the spiritual nectar of the Ramakrishna movement, the invigorating ideas of Vedanta, and the insights of Indian values and culture. *Prabuddha Bharata* also brings you inspirational reading material on a wide variety of topics of global interest.

You value this journal and the cause it represents, and would surely like to share it with others.

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

How you can contribute:

- *Gift* subscriptions to your friends and family, and encourage your thinking friends to subscribe.
- *Sponsor* a subscription for a worthy library or institution known to you, or let us choose one.
- *Contribute* to the *Prabuddha Bharata* **Permanent Fund**, and help ensure the longevity of the *Prabuddha Bharata*.
- *Advertise* your company in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, and encourage your colleagues to do so.

PRABUDDHA BHARATA
or AWAKENED INDIA

Send to: **Advaita Ashrama**
5 Dehi Entally Road
Kolkata 700 014

Yes, I would like to

- ☐ *Gift* _____ life subscriptions to Prabuddha Bharata at Rs 1200 each
- ☐ *Sponsor* _____ libraries and institutions for 20 years at Rs 1200 each
- ☐ *Donate* Rs _____ to the Prabuddha Bharata Permanent Fund

Amount of Rs _____ is enclosed herewith by draft / money order

PLEASE PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS   *Send my gift subscriptions to:*

Your Name _____   _____
Address _____   _____
_____   _____
PIN _____   _____
E-mail address _____   _____
Phone No _____   _____
Date _____   _____
Details of DD _____   _____

SHARE YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE !
GIFT PRABUDDHA BHARATA TO LIBRARIES

Prabuddha Bharata Library Initiative

Let many more benefit from the thought provoking content read by you every month in Prabuddha Bharata. Join the Prabuddha Bharata Library Initiative by gifting a life subscription to a library. You can either gift it to the library of your choice, or to the library selected by us. Your name along with the library you sponsor, will be published in the *Prabuddha Bharata*. Come, sponsor as many libraries as you can and spread the ethos of Indian Culture.

Prabuddha Bharata Library Initiative:

Name of Sponsor	Beneficiary Library
24. Biswanath Mukhopadhyay, Ranchi	National Council of Education, Bengal, Kolkata
25. Sri Jaya Balakrishna, Bangalore	Gandhigram Rural University, Tamil Nadu
26. — do —	Gauhati University, Guwahati
27. — do —	Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University, UP
28. Surendra Agrawal, New Delhi	Anand Agricultural University, Gujarat
29. — do —	Gujarat University, Navrangpur, Ahmedabad

Prabuddha Bharata Patron Subscribers:

333. Krishna Tripathi, Mumbai	334. Pankaj Kumar, Bihar

Send my gift subscriptions to:

PLEASE PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS

_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____

_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____
_____   _____

Traditional Wisdom

Harmony

भद्रं नो अपि वातय मनो दक्षमुत क्रतुम् ।
अधा ते सख्ये अन्धसो वि वो मदे रणन् गावो न यवसे विवक्षसे ॥

Instil in us a wholesome and happy mind, capable and understanding.
Then shall we ever delight in your friendship, like cows who gladly rejoice
in meadows green. (O Soma) you are great.   (Rig Veda, 10.25.1)

अर्यम्यं वरुण मित्र्यं वा सखायं वा सदमिद् भ्रातरं वा ।
वेशं वा नित्यं वरुणारणं वा यत् सीमागश्चकृमा शिश्रथस्तत् ॥

If we have committed an offence against a benefactor, a friend, a compan-
ion, a brother, a neighbour ever with us, or a stranger, O Varuna, remove
from us the trespass.   (Rig Veda, 5.85.7)

अभयं मित्रादभयममित्रादभयं ज्ञातादभयं पुरो यः ।
अभयं नक्तमभयं दिवा नः सर्वा आशा मम मित्रं भवन्तु ॥

May we be without fear of friend and foe. May we be without fear of the
known and the unknown. May we be without fear by night and by day. Let
all regions be my friend.   (Atharva Veda, 19.15.6)

Return love for great hatred.
Otherwise, when a great hatred is reconciled,
           some of it will surely remain.
How can this end in goodness?
Therefore, the sage holds to the left half of an agreement
           but does not exact what the other holder ought to do.
The virtuous resort to agreement;
The virtueless resort to exaction.
The Tao of heaven shows no partiality;
It abides always with good men.   (*Tao Te Ching*, 79)

The sects of other people all deserve reverence for some reason or other.
By thus acting man exalts his own sect and, at the same time, does ser-
vice to the sects of other people. By acting contrariwise a man hurts his
own sect. Therefore, concord alone is correct. (Ashoka, 'Rock Edict 12')

THIS MONTH

Conflict management is one of the most important contemporary global concerns. In a nuclear world every significant conflict carries within it the potential for mass destruction. And nationalism is one of the major forces that divides as much as it unites people. It is, therefore, **Beyond Nationalism** that our vision ought to be set in the interest of global peace.

Not only is India home to a whole range of conflicts, it has its own ways of addressing and living with them too. Ahimsa, dialogue, and reverence for life are some of the important components of this process. Prof. Indra Nath Choudhuri, an academician, administrator, and cultural diplomat of repute from Delhi writes about **Confronting Conflicts: The Indian Tradition**.

Jaishankar Prasad's historical plays highlighted cultural nationalism as a value alternative to medieval orthodoxy in early twentieth-century North India. But the portrayal of **Struggle and Conflict in the Plays of Jaishankar Prasad** also has important lessons for us today, argues the noted Hindi littérateur Dr Narendra Kohli.

Pallavi Banerjee, Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Bethune College, Kolkata, discusses the social dynamics of terrorism and the strategies that are being applied to contain it in **Terrorism: Understanding Its Mitigation**.

That the Bhagavadgita is not a militant text is largely accepted as a truism. But this conviction seems to be challenged from time to time. Dr Jeffery D Long, Chair, Religious Studies, Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania, examines this claim in **War and Non-violence in the Bhagavadgita**.

Vedanta and the Search for Truth is a minimally edited transcript of Swami Sarvagatananda's 1981 lecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston. The late author is former Minister-in-Charge, Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, Boston.

A P N Pankaj concludes his review of the **Place of the Adi Granth in the Punjabi Literary Tradition** with a brief analysis of the ways in which the folk traditions, language, and philosophical outlook of the Adi Granth have had a formative influence on the Punjabi language and literature. The author, a scholar of repute, lives in Chandigarh.

The Haridasa Literary Tradition of Karnataka is a vibrantly successful exercise in spiritual democracy, says Dr H N Muralidhara, Professor of Kannada, V V N Degree College, Bangaluru, as he takes a look at its central message and modes of expression.

Swami Durgananda, a monastic member of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore, outlines the works and philosophy of **Sant Tulsidas** and sums up his influence on Indian society.
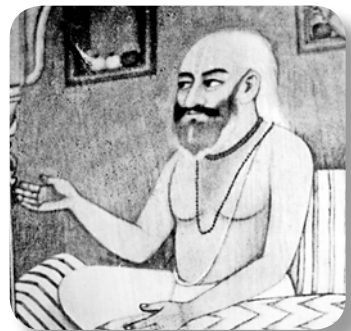
Beyond Nationalism

Historically minded readers would notice the anachronistic use of the term 'nation' in Dr Narendra Kohli's article on 'Struggle and Conflict in the Plays of Jaishankar Prasad' that appears in this number. To be fair to Dr Kohli, the terms '*desha*' and '*rashtra*' that he uses in his original Hindi text have been in use since Vedic times, albeit with connotations very different from the ones they have come to carry in the last few centuries.

It has been pointed out that 'as an ideology and discourse, nationalism became prevalent in North America and Western Europe in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and shortly thereafter in Latin America. The dates that are often singled out as signalling the advent of nationalism include 1775 (the first partition of Poland), 1776 (the American Declaration of Independence), 1789 and 1792 (the commencement and second phase of the French Revolution), and 1807 (Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation*).'

According to Ernest Barker, 'The self-consciousness of nations is a product of the nineteenth century. … Nations were already there; they had indeed been there for centuries. But it is not the things that are simply "there" that matter in human life. What really and finally matters is the thing which is apprehended as an idea, and, as an idea, is vested with emotion until it becomes a cause and a spring of action. In the world of action apprehended ideas are alone electrical; and a nation must be an idea as well as a fact before it can become a dynamic force.'

The idea of the 'nation' that emerged with 'dynamic force' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Western Europe was well summarized by Joseph Stalin: 'A nation is a historically constituted community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.' The events of the last century have laid bare the sad fact that this conception of the nation is dangerously exclusive, and in defining themselves in contrast to 'others', nations carry within them the potential for serious conflict.

Interestingly, social thinkers of the last century were prone to believe that only states that qualified as nations—in consonance with definitions resembling Stalin's—were likely to be stable. India thus was given little chance of surviving as an independent state, as has been vividly described by Ramachandra Guha in *India after Gandhi*. India's was a unique experiment in linguistic, religious, ethnic, political, and socio-economic diversity. J B S Haldane, the biologist, who renounced his British citizenship for an Indian one, announced in 1961 that he was 'proud of being a citizen of India, which is a lot more diverse than Europe, let alone the USA, USSR, or China, and thus a better model for a possible world organization. It may of course break up, but it is a wonderful experiment. So, I want to be labelled a citizen of India.'

Nearly fifty years after Haldane, Guha can assert: 'One might think of India as being Europe's past as well as its future. It is Europe's past, in that it has reproduced, albeit more fiercely and intensely, the conflicts of a modernizing, industrializing, and urbanizing society. But it is also its future in that it anticipated, by some fifty years, the European attempt to create a multilingual, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, political and economic community.'

The modern Indian experiment is historically unique. It is true, as Percival Spear reiterated, that 'the unity of the country, however frequently broken, is as natural an Indian conception as the

balance of power, however often threatened, is a constant European conception in politics'. Such diverse foreign travellers as Hsuan-tsang in the seventh century, Alberuni in the eleventh, and François Bernier in the seventeenth saw the subcontinent as one socio-cultural entity despite marked internal diversity.

The 'all-India consciousness' in ancient India, S V Desika Char argues, was both the 'cause and effect of the religious and cultural homogeneity attained and the common bonds forged in political and economic matters. It manifested itself in several ways: common religious heritage and every religious and theological trend acquiring an all-India sweep; monasteries and pilgrim centres held in equal veneration being spread over the whole land; the homogeneity of the ruling classes interlinked through marriage and family connections; free movement of people and freedom of trade leading to economic integration.'

The advent of Islam posed a new challenge to the ancient Indian spirit of harmony, acceptance, and assimilation, and the cultural history of medieval India may be seen as a struggle between conservative and liberal elements—both Hindu and Islamic—for socio-cultural assertion. If there were such orthodox Muslims as the redoubtable Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, 'who regarded the Sufis as more dangerous than the ulama', there were also thinkers and poets like Amir Khusrau who saw India and its culture 'not as being exclusive (as Alberuni had judged it to be in his own time), but as open, innovative and tolerant', a people 'speaking various languages and yet constituting a single whole'. 'There cannot be any teacher than the way of life of the people,' says Khusrau, 'it is the effect of the cultural environment of this land … [that] if perchance any Iranian, Greek, or Arab comes by, he will not have to ask for anything, because they will treat him as their own.'

If the political division of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 threatened to seriously undermine the Indian ethos, each following year has continued to prove doomsayers wrong. Not that any of these years has been free of its share of conflict—ethnic, religious, linguistic, and socio-economic—but these only go to affirm Ernest Renan's claim that 'the existence of a nation is an everyday plebiscite; it is, like the very existence of the individual, a perpetual affirmation of life. … This is less metaphysical than the concept of divine right, less brutal than the so-called historic right.' Moreover, 'to have suffered, worked, hoped together, that is worth more than the common taxes and frontiers conforming to ideas of strategy: that is what one really understands despite differences of race and language. … In fact, national sorrows are more significant than triumphs because they impose obligations and demand a common effort.'

It is both interesting and disquieting that even in such 'melting-pot' states as the American or Australian some see themselves as having a single dominant culture. To Samuel Huntington 'America was created as a Protestant society just as and for some of the reasons Pakistan and Israel were created as Muslim and Jewish societies in the twentieth century'. And according to the former Australian premier John Howard, 'You've got to have a dominant culture. Ours is Anglo-Saxon—our language, our literature, our institutions.' Such views, Ramachandra Guha notes, 'were not endorsed by the founders of the Indian nation, by those who wrote the Indian constitution'. Thus India 'has sustained a diversity of religions and languages that the likes of Howard and Huntington deem inimical to national solidarity'.

'Shall India die?' Swami Vivekananda wrote in 1894 to the citizens of Madras, 'Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct, all moral perfection will be extinct, all sweet-souled sympathy for religion will be extinct, all ideality will be extinct.' 'Such a thing can never be,' he asserted. This was no narrow patriotic sentiment. Three years later, as he reached the Suez Canal on his way back to India, he wrote, 'Once more Asia. What am I? Asiatic, European, or American? I feel a curious medley of personalities in me.' Swami Vivekananda could well have been making a statement of his 'Indianness' here—an Indianness we all need to cherish.　　🙏

Confronting Conflicts: The Indian Tradition

Prof. Indra Nath Choudhuri

THE world scene today is quite dismal. After the end of the cold war we all presumed that certain peace would dawn; but, on the contrary, we find a considerable increase in conflicts arising around the globe—problems that concern regional autonomy and national sovereignty, linguistic and ethnic inequality, religious fanaticism and ethnic rivalry, terrorism and post-colonial international interventions.

These conflicts have been further aggravated by ideological, technological, and economic shifts. Traditionally, conflicts were about settling border disputes, controlling resources, capturing power, retaining tribal or clan dominance, or continuing instability in neighbouring states and regions. But in recent times we have been seeing newer dimensions to these conflicts. And for some of the old ones—where we thought we were seeing light at the end of the tunnel—things have gone awry, even gone in the opposite direction. The existent and potential threat of these conflicts constitutes a clear challenge to the harmony, peace, and prosperity of the world's nations and societies. It is, therefore, increasingly important that we take a hard and close look at our time-worn approaches towards bringing peace to strife-torn lands and bridging the gulf of hatred between communities. We have to find out where we are going wrong and endeavour to find better ways to establish peace.

Reaching the Roots

It can be argued that understanding the root cause of problems is essential for conflict resolution. Conflict management is indispensable for achieving durable peace and prosperity in the world. And

conflict in a given system cannot be managed without dialogue and collaborative processes that create harmony. In Buddhism it is said that to be in harmony with others one must first be at peace with oneself. In the same way, a society or a country should first evolve a self-equilibrating regimen to ward off and resolve inner conflicts. And this process must involve all sectors if an efficient conflict-management organism is to be developed.

There is no doubt that India is the cradle of many religions—religions which have coexisted, to a great extent peacefully, for hundreds of years. This has been possible because of India's ethos of plurality, humanism, openness, and adaptability, and her power of assimilation. Hence, if we are to search for strategies that promote harmony and reconciliation, it would definitely be beneficial to look into India's ancient heritage of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain philosophies, as well as the teachings of medieval Sufis and poet saints—with their all-embracing message of love—and also to learn from our rich experience of interacting with an open world. According to Indian philosophy, everything in this universe is in constant conflict: *Dvandātmakaṁ jagat*. However, the Upanishads state that this conflict can be resolved by experiencing that one Entity through which all beings are perceived in one's own self and one's own self in all beings; an experience that naturally eliminates all hatred from the heart:

Yastu sarvāṇi bhūtānyātmanyevānupaśyati;
Sarvabhūteṣu cātmānaṁ tato na vijugupsate.[1]

This realization depends upon a deep understanding of the existence of a supreme Reality and one's identity with that Reality. This identity of all

beings with Brahman—Paramatman, the Supreme Being, or Transcendental Soul—is the basic tenet of the Vedanta philosophy.

As a corollary of this principle, if anyone harms another being—man, woman, animal, insect, or even plant—one harms oneself. The concept of ahimsa, non-violence, has its root in this monistic theory, that every single life is a spark of the Divine. Our recognition of that Divine must be so broad, so universal, as to identify ourselves first with every living being and ultimately with the whole of Creation. When God is to be experienced in all, how can there be any justification for conflict and war, which are nothing but self-destruction and self-annihilation? The *Taittiriya Upanishad* explains that when one sees difference, even in the smallest degree, there arises fear. So long as there is another besides you, there is finitude and hence fear. When the notion of difference is transcended through the vision of the underlying unity of existence, there is fearlessness; and this is moksha, liberation. The Bhagavadgita, the Upanishads, the *Brahma Sutra*, and other religio-philosophical treatises of ancient India are full of references to this highest doctrine of monism, of which pacifism and humanitarianism are direct outcomes.

Righteous Violence

The Indian tradition, however, while extolling the value of peace, also accepted violence as legitimate when it was a matter of safeguarding the general order. Moreover, refusal to engage in acts of force to preserve harmony of a higher order would actually be considered a serious lapse. That the Vedic literature is full of war-spirit is shown by the fact that about one fourth of the Rig Vedic hymns are addressed to Indra, a war god. And Shiva is a god who destroys. War was enjoined as a defensive measure dictated by necessity, not for its own sake, and was also not exalted as the highest act of moral excellence. It was accepted as a contingent part of one's duty. In the Gita Sri Krishna warns Arjuna: If you do not fight this righteous war, you will be committing an *adhārmika*, unrighteous, act and will certainly incur sin as well as lose your reputation.[2] One has to do one's duty.

The Gita provides arguments for the legitimacy of killing, including the teaching that the soul in its essential nature is deathless and immortal: 'He who thinks this Self a killer and he who thinks it killed, both fail to understand; this Self does not kill nor is it killed' (2.19). Besides, righteous war is Arjuna's dharma, duty, since he belongs to the warrior kshatriya caste.

Another justification for violence appears in the theory of the avataras of Vishnu. The action of safeguarding dharma is encouraged rather than renouncing action. Violence is legitimate when used against enemies of dharma, as for instance when deployed against enemies of the king, who is entrusted with the protection of dharma.

Two points are clear from this: (i) violence can be resorted to only in just causes, and (ii) there is something that can be categorized as righteous violence.

Therefore, the Indian tradition does not categorically prohibit the use of violence, in spite of extolling ahimsa as a great virtue; but it certainly prefers the gospel of peace and *maitrī*, friendship, towards all. And it was the concept of ahimsa leading to harmony that was generally applied in all conflict management and reconciliations. The Indian tradition considers philosophical pacifism as a virtue capable of practical realization.

The Crowning Strategy: Love

Harmony means togetherness, empathy, and love. It is love which deals with the root cause of conflict and resolves strife in a humane way. Love is the most profound strategy for resolving conflict and is talked about by practically every religion, by the ancient rishis, by Sufi fakirs and medieval saints, and by modern thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi.

Love is a fundamental directing force that floods the soul and flows outward towards others. Love is always rooted in the field of 'the other'. Through love one lives with a constant feeling of 'coming together'—becoming and being dialectically united.

This is the crowning strategy of conflict settlement that lays the foundation for reconciliation; without it there cannot be any genuine peace in the world. Love goes beyond the monocultures of industrial and technological civilization. Monocultures look at things as binary opposites. Thus, for some people, every Muslim became a suspect after 9/11. Love, on the contrary, creates a landscape of harmony—a far safer landscape for all kinds of life than what a monoculture proposes. We should also note that, whereas the monocultural landscape has a totalitarian tendency, the landscape of harmony is egalitarian and free; it does not apply the principle of 'an eye for an eye' but places its trust in tolerance, solidarity, and dialogue to settle differences and heal wounds. It is human love for each other that harmoniously rejoins us. This love is the most potent strategy for confronting conflicts. It paves the way for the establishment of a culture of peace.

Ahimsa is a natural derivative of love. Linguistically a negative term—a-himsa—it is not in fact a negative concept. It is a positive attitude engendered by such virtues as *karuṇā*, compassion, *dayā*, kindness, and *kṣānti*, forbearance. Ahimsa as a moral virtue is first mentioned in the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, where the word 'ahimsa' implies self-sacrifice and restraint.[3] The doctrine of meeting hatred with love, anger with calm, and violence with non-violence was very much acceptable to the Vedic seers. The ideal of maintaining friendly relations with all appealed to the Aryans the most. In their daily prayers, they invoked divine blessings thus: 'May all beings regard me with the eye of a friend. May I regard all beings with the eye of a friend. With the eye of a friend may we regard one another.'[4] The Vedic seers appealed for world peace by promoting such friendly relationship with all. They wanted genuine peace from all sides, from all beings, and from the entire universe:

> Let there be peace on earth and peace in the sky,
> Peace in heaven and peace in the waters,
> Peace in plants and herbs and peace in all elements,
> Peace in peace itself and peace in the universe,
> Let peace and peace and peace be all round (36.17).

Fearless Ahimsa

The Vedic seers articulated the doctrine of friendship and peace in the real sense of the term and added *abhaya*, fearlessness, to prove that peace under duress cannot turn people's hearts from mutual distrust, hatred, and enmity. The process of resolving conflict and violence has to be gone through without any fear and with utmost sincerity. This is one of the cardinal virtues commended by Sri Krishna and the Vedic seers. The Gita mentions fearlessness as the first among the *daivī sampat*, divine qualities.[5] Fearlessness is said to be the same as enlightenment. In fact, fearlessness is the other side of ahimsa. 'Injure no being' is correlative with the notion that one should spread fearlessness among all beings.

Only a person who is fearless can follow the path of non-violence, since walking this path demands great courage and a strong will. Manu accords ahimsa prime position in the list of virtues that, according to him, summarize dharma.[6] The notion of ahimsa came also to occupy a central place in the teachings of the great expounders of India's heterodox philosophies: Mahavira and Buddha. Another great votary of ahimsa was King Ashoka, who was responsible for transforming ahimsa from a personal virtue to a national moral commitment. To Ashoka, ahimsa was a virtue 'which was achieved through piety only and which brought bliss in this world and in the next'.[7]

Ahimsa is not a restrictive term with a singular connotation—it has multiple interpretations. The Mahabharata, in its 'Aranyaka Parva', explains this with the help of a parable. A little pond was guarded by a yaksha, demigod. A single sip from that pond killed each of the Pandava brothers except Yudhishthira, who brought them back to life by answering the yaksha's questions. The yaksha asked: '*Kaśca dharmaḥ paro loke*; which is the highest dharma for people living in this world?' Yudhishthira replied: *Ānṛśaṁsyam*, non-injury. Here *ānṛśaṁsyam* or ahimsa means 'not inflicting bodily harm on others'. It refers to one who is not cruel, mischievous, base, vile, or malicious; or, in positive terms, one who is humane, compassionate, and equanimous—one

who does not fly away from this world and at the same time is not utterly absorbed in it.

This extended meaning of the term was used by Mahatma Gandhi in modern times. For Gandhi, ahimsa meant more than not doing physical harm to an opponent: 'I accept the interpretation of Ahimsa, namely, that it is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active state of Ahimsa, requires you to resist the wrong-doer.'[8] Gandhi brought the concept of ahimsa into the political sphere and was able to generate mass movements of non-violence and non-cooperation that became powerful forces for political change. He used the term 'satyagraha', soul force, to describe his novel method of resolving conflict, and suggested that the spiritual realm had a power no less effective than those of the material realm. Gandhi himself summarizes this process thus: 'I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper-edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance. The resistance of the soul that I should offer instead would elude him. It would at first dazzle him, and at last compel recognition from him, which recognition would not humiliate him but uplift him.'[9]

The following qualities, which are fundamental components of satyagraha, turn this concept into an edifice of spiritual morality: (i) faith in human goodness; (ii) truth; (iii) non-violence; (iv) creative self-suffering; (v) faith in just means and ends—a principle which is a reflection of the Hindu belief in karma; (vi) rejection of coercion; and (vii) fearlessness. All these qualities taken together help us understand satyagraha as an efficient method for solving conflict and also as a way of life based on spiritual morality.

Dialogue

Dialogue between people, religions, and cultures is meant to deal with differences, to understand and appreciate common bonds as well as diversities. It enables us to pursue the higher goals of peace, tolerance, and civil dignity. It also helps us, says Ramin Jahanbegloo, to shed light, *dia*, on things through the spoken word, *logos*. In order to enter into a meaningful dialogue aimed at resolving conflicts and forging a better mutual understanding, every individual has to be prepared to exercise tolerance towards other ways of thinking, towards people who base their daily lives on values and experiences different from one's own. Let us remember here the well-known statement by Einstein, that 'a person starts to live when he can live outside himself'. Hence, tolerance alone is not enough; equally important is the notion of 'responsibility'—for other cultures as well as for one's own. While tolerance means not interfering with others' ways of living and thinking, 'responsibility' actually suggests responsiveness to the 'otherness' of individuals and communities.

Today, says Jahanbegloo, we are not experiencing a clash of civilizations so much as a clash of intolerances. Intolerance is mainly the inability or unwillingness to endure something different. For this reason, there is an urgency to show love and understanding towards others and their otherness. Only then will we be open to the possibilities suggested by others' thinking as well as to the varied voices of dialogue itself. The Rig Veda says that the only way to remove *vaimatya*, differences, is to understand each other, to move together, and also to know each other's mind: *Saṁ gacchadhvaṁ saṁ vadadhvaṁ saṁ vo manāṁsi jānatām.*[10]

This will help attain, as Toshihiko Izutsu says, a 'fusion of horizons', achieve human solidarity, and bring peace.

Varieties of Conflict

As was previously stated, we are witnessing multiple forms of violence in contemporary societies: ecological violence, religious fundamentalism, social exclusion, and brute physical violence as well. These are the emerging challenges, and India can always fall back upon its religio-cultural tradition to effectively face them.

Environmental pollution is one of the serious present-day challenges confronting humankind. In the name of progress, modern techno-scientific civilization is slowly destroying the ecology of our planet. Modern humans do not regard the natural world as alive in the same sense that they are alive. They do not think that humans and nature are mutually related, that both are part of universal life. The human being has tamed nature and put it to its service. But environmental pollution has shattered the illusion that by taming nature happiness and peace can be attained.

In the Indian world view there is no dichotomy between matter and spirit, humans and nature. In this holistic view all life is one, and the inner and external realities are interdependent. Indians look upon human beings and nature as 'waves of the same river'. Indian literature and art are full of such motifs as the lotus, sun, fire, and water. The lotus symbolizes purity and generation; the sun, knowledge and truth. The Himalayas are the symbol of the upward surge of the human spirit and of the axis around which the entire cosmos revolves. The *sindhu*, sea, is the symbol of the infinite Reality. The Indian attitude to progress is one of harmony with nature's rhythm. The Hindu and Islamic traditions of India, many a time reflected in the parables and mystical songs of poet saints and Sufis, express the idea of a rhythmic universe in which human beings and nature have a symbiotic relationship. Only recently has the whole world somehow recognized that pollution is a threat to the survival of humanity, and that it cannot be cured without restraint of greed. The Upanishads, while talking about the supreme Reality, which is all-pervading, add: Don't be greedy. There is only one path to survival and that path is the ecological one, harmony between humanity and nature, sustainability and diversity as opposed to domination, exploitation, and *parigraha*, appropriation. *Parigraha* leads to greed, and subsequently to violence.

The world is facing another challenge: religious fundamentalism. This problem is also eating into the very fabric of India's composite culture and pluralistic world view. The Indian ethos is an apt illustration of organic pluralism, by which different groups attempt to preserve their unique cultural attributes while, at the same time, developing common institutional participation at national level. India's constitutionally approved secularism is a sound policy, but it has not delivered the results hoped for. In a religiocentric society like India's, there is a lot of confusion in the understanding of the term 'secularism'. The spirit of secularism in India can be effectively articulated only through India's own cultural terms—tolerance and understanding of the equality of all religions. The Atharva Veda says that this earth accommodates peoples of different persuasions and languages, as in a peaceful home—may it benefit all of us.

The acceptance of this religious plurality is possible in India because dharma is understood as a socio-ethical principle. It is like nature's centripetal force, which holds, sustains, and keeps things revolving round a centre. The intrinsic spirit of dharma is love towards all. Secularism has to be understood with reference to dharma—universality of spiritual values. The Indian cultural ethos does not accept secularism as something opposed to religion or as a totalitarian view of religion that considers India a Hindu nation. The answer to communalism lies not in abolishing religion but in fostering a proper understanding of dharma as a unifying pluralistic force. It takes the like of such critical insiders as Shankaracharya, Gautama Buddha, Muslim Sufis, Guru Nanak, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi to point out the wrongs within a tradition and suggest ways to rectify them from within. Guru Nanak critically examined the Sant tradition and put fresh stress on internal piety and devotion, rejecting caste, ritual, magic, and miracles. He wanted to go beyond what he considered the limitations of both Hinduism and Islam. Mahatma Gandhi realized the vitality of the culture-bound concept of dharma while communicating with the masses of the country.

Another challenge that India has still to effectively deal with is the suppression of lower castes and

the violation of the democratic rights of adivasis, dalits, and the rural poor. There are innumerable cases of atrocities and violence against the weaker sections of Indian society. Caste distinction has created bitterness and hatred, and at times has led to riots. Mahatma Gandhi fought all his life to eradicate this social menace. This challenge can be met by properly understanding and living by the concepts of *ṛta* and *satya*. *Ṛta* is the dynamic universal order, and *satya* the sustaining truth. To regulate the social and moral aspects of *ṛta*, Indian society was divided into four classes. This division provides the archetypal design of a social system aiming at the all-round development and fulfilment of an individual who, at the same time, contributes to the welfare of society.

Literary documents show ample evidence that in the beginning this class system, now changed into a caste system, actually effected a functional division of society based on the particular potentialities and leanings of its different members. A Vedic seer says in the Rig Veda: 'I am a poet, my father is a physician, and mother grinds flour. Striving for wealth with varied plans, we remain in (the world) like kine (in their stalls)' (9.112.3). In fact, 'varna', the original term for caste—unlike the later *jāti*, which is determined by birth—actually means 'that which is chosen'. A student is called a *varṇin* because he chooses a profession for which he is preparing himself. He could choose the profession of a brahmana and devote himself to the acquisition of knowledge, the profession of a kshatriya with the purpose of protecting society, that of a vaishya to give nourishment to the whole society, or the activities of a shudra to provide stability and movement. This division of labour is metaphorically explained in terms of the parts of the human body—all of them are interconnected and the absence of any one can cripple the whole system. Indian culture conceived of four *varna*s, with provision for upward and downward mobility based mainly on one's deeds. Today one may feel that these are old concepts, but Indian concepts, however old or modern, have a spirit of Indianness, a deep sense

of continuity in the midst of change. In India the past lives in the present and both are carried forward into the future. With better education about human values and proper regulation of economic and political powers the ills of the caste system can be mitigated and a consciousness aroused to fight obscurantism, parochialism, and suppression of the weaker sections of society. A truly egalitarian social spirit demands that the common people be independent from every form of dominance. Both Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi considered the poor as God himself, and addressed them as *daridranārāyaṇa*.

Reverence for Life

Modern societies are producing many selfish and individualistic human beings with little sense of responsibility towards society, individuals who think they can live within themselves. The traditional social system of India does not absolve any person, except the sannyasin, from their social obligations. A person is born with a five-fold obligation: (i) towards ancestors, fulfilled through the household life that carries forward the family tradition; (ii) towards sages, fulfilled through the intellectual pursuit of knowledge and truth; (iii) towards gods, fulfilled through dedication to the Divine; (iv) towards other human beings, fulfilled through social and community service; and finally (v) towards other living beings, fulfilled through the care of nature and its creatures. One who fulfils these obligations lives a life that pulsates with the heart of all Creation, rather than a life that throbs only in its own heart. One cannot be deeply happy if one is limited to oneself alone; to attain bliss in life one has to dedicate oneself to others, to society. One of the meanings of the Vedic concept of yajna, sacrifice, is the fusion of the individual with the collective through charity and dedication. The Quran directs every person to give a portion of their income to charity—*zakat*—a principle shared by many in India, irrespective of religion, social status, or level of education. Indianness does not spring from an exotic content, but from the mind

behind the organization of that content.

One of the most serious challenges of today is widespread physical violence. This has tainted all other challenges confronting India. At the heart of violence is a complete disregard for life, for the human body. Two factors related to the body have created a crisis in the traditional religious and philosophical understanding of human life: (i) the licence to mutilate and demolish a body in the name of religion and political ideology, and (ii) the encouragement to use the body to stimulate sexual hunger. In traditional Indian culture sexuality is only one metaphor among many, and not the most significant. At present sexuality has become an obsessional referent for modern culture. Given to the service of fashion, the human body becomes sexualized and is dissociated from the traditional system of healthy sublimation. The body is deconstructed to sell a product, thereby breaking the order of symbolism and making it subservient to business and technology.

In a culture that still believes in the paradigm of continuity, the body is to be considered as the hardware of the complex technical device that is the human mind. It must be nurtured well so that it can support the software of human thought. The human body has been viewed since time immemorial as the abode of the Atman, the house of God. There are several well-known expressions of this sacred relation—*deha-dehin*, *śarīra-śarīrin*, *kṣetra-kṣetrajña*, *aṅga-aṅgin*, *pura-puruṣa*. There is no reason why the human body should not be saved from abuse and destruction. Metaphors symbolizing the coexistence of the human body and its indweller—like the house and the householder; the city and the king; the chariot and the rider; the cage and the bird; the chadar and the weaver; the *chunri*, scarf, and the bride—are very much alive in the Indian written and oral traditions.

Perhaps the most significant way in which a culture can contain violence is by responding to it with the time-tested universal laws of ethics, humanity, and love instead of rational laws alone. Over-rationalization also creates problems. It de-

personalizes the members of society. Therefore, it is imperative to tackle this problem of physical violence by reviving our reverence for life. Men and women must see other beings in their own selves and their own selves in others. Both the physical as well as the spiritual dimensions of the human being are equally important. This understanding helps develop cultural syncretism, moral and religious humanism, and free and noble human beings. Human dignity cannot be achieved through technology, which turns people into cogs of a machine. It can be achieved only through ethics; and ethical achievement is measured by how much our actions are governed by compassion and love—never by the amount of greed, violence, and aggressiveness.

Peace is more than the absence of conflict: it encompasses the protection of common ideals and human rights. India has always spoken in the language of peace and human fellowship. In her five thousand or more years of documented history, India has passed through the entire gamut of human experience—prosperity and adversity, victory and defeat, freedom and subjection. She has learnt from these experiences and acquired a spirit of gentleness, fellowship, tolerance, and universality. Her voice has been the voice of peace and tolerance. Her great children, those whose ideas are followed by millions even today—Buddha, Mahavira, Guru Nanak, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and many others—have proved through their lives that India's voice is not a voice of weakness but one of strength. ❧

References

1. *Isha Upanishad*, 6.
2. Bhagavadgita, 2.33.
3. *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 3.17.4.
4. Yajur Veda, 36.18.
5. Gita, 16.1.
6. *Manu Smriti*, 10.63.
7. Ashoka, 'Rock Edict 17'.
8. Mahatma Gandhi, *Young India: 1919–1922* (Madras: S Ganesan, 1922), 247.
9. M K Gandhi, *Non-violence in Peace and War* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1944), 50.
10. Rig Veda, 10.190.2.

Struggle and Conflict in the Plays of Jaishankar Prasad

Dr Narendra Kohli

ALL playwrights have contemplated struggle in one form or another. Though the popular saying 'no conflict, no drama' has never been fully endorsed, a systematic study of the structure of drama makes it clear that a drama is necessarily meant to achieve some end. The anticipation of results leads to a constant struggle between hope and despair. More often than not, the end is ultimately achieved.

That opposing viewpoints have opposing philosophies at their core cannot be denied, nor can the conflicts they engender. Various perspectives, ways of working, interpretations, and power equations corroborate the struggle inherent in drama. Most of Jaishankar Prasad's important plays are not mere depictions of Puranic or historical events, they also portray their inherent strife and conflict with adequate verbosity. It cannot be claimed that Prasad's plays fulfil all the conditions of traditional Indian dramaturgy, but the struggle and conflict portrayed in them not only highlight the main demands made of the narrative by Indian texts, they also completely represent Prasad's thought in several general and specific ways. This claim is substantiated by an analysis of his plays *Sajjana* (Noblemen), *Prayashchitta* (Expiation), *Rajyashri*, *Janamejaya ka Nagayajna* (Janamejaya's Snake Sacrifice), *Skandagupta*, *Chandragupta*, and *Dhruvaswamini*. *Ajatashatru* and *Vishakha*, however, do not belong to this class.

Enemies: Internal and External

Sajjana is a one-act play based on an incident from the Mahabharata. Though relatives, the Pandavas and Kauravas stand opposed to each other and are involved in constant conflict. Having been defeated in a game of dice by the Kauravas, the Pandavas go into exile. Even in defeat they try to remain contented and steadfast in dharma and come to terms with the difficult times. Duryodhana, however, is not satisfied by merely defeating them. He also wants to humiliate and hurt them by flaunting his riches and making fun of their miserable condition, and he proceeds to the forest with this aim. Defeated and deprived of their territory and army, bound by the dignity of their characters and the demands of dharma, the Pandavas are unwilling to react to Duryodhana's insolence. Gandharva Chitrasena is a friend of Arjuna and is unhappy with Duryodhana's wickedness. Powerful—and free to protest—he makes Duryodhana a prisoner and wants to punish him. But Arjuna comes to Duryodhana's rescue at Yudhishthira's behest. He defeats Chitrasena through his power and skill in battle and frees Duryodhana.

Besides portraying Yudhishthira's civility, Prasad has voiced his views on struggle and conflict in this play. The Pandavas are the heroes, hence the playwright identifies with them. Duryodhana plays the role of the opposing element. Chitrasena is a friend of the Pandavas. Why then did Yudhishthira send Arjuna to fight him and why did Arjuna free his enemy by defeating his friend? Yudhishthira's civility alone does not explain this.

Though enemies, the Kauravas are related to the Pandavas; their enmity, therefore, was akin to domestic quarrel. Chitrasena was a friend, but he was an outsider all the same, and his attack on the Kauravas was an attack by an external force. In these circumstances the Pandavas overlook their friendship with Chitrasena and oppose him as an external aggressor.

Most of Prasad's historical and Puranic plays are based on some particularly turbulent period of history. It is a historical truth that every national feud has factual causes that lead the nation to the point from where only proper leadership can save it, failing which the country is led to ruin by destructive forces. These are the times when the quality of decisions made by the leaders of a nation determines its destiny.

The turmoil and strife do not remain confined to a limited area. Often, external foes will attack a nation that is divided, taking advantage of their internal rifts. Conversely, disruptive, divisive, and selfish forces within the nation turn rebellious, taking advantage of external attacks. Duties are forgotten and the nation is blinded by its pursuit of pleasure and luxury. But for *Ajatashatru*, all of Prasad's important plays portray the workings of these two forces.

In *Prayashchitta* Jaichand is Prithviraj Chauhan's internal enemy and Muhammad Ghuri is the invader from outside. In *Janamejaya ka Nagayajna* the Nagas attack from outside and the Kashyapas oppose Janamejaya from within. In *Rajyashri* Rajyavardhana and Harshavardhana have to fight the external attackers Devagupta and Shashanka and also tackle the traitorous Shantibhikshu, or Vikataghosha.

This pattern becomes particularly transparent in *Skandagupta*. Skandagupta not only represents the masses of India but also becomes one with the nation. On the one hand he grapples with foreign invaders like the Shaka, the Hun, and the Pushyamitras—if we take the Pushyamitras to belong to a foreign clan—and on the other he is confronted by internal rebels like Purugupta, Anantadevi, Bhatarka, Vijaya, Prapanchabuddhi, and other Buddhists.

Similarly, Chandragupta Maurya of *Chandragupta* represents this country and, along with his many allies, faces not only foreign raiders like Alexander, Philip, and Seleucus but also internal enemies like Nanda, Rakshasa, and Ambhika. In this play Prasad creates a new category of opposing forces not seen in his earlier dramas or in his last play *Dhruvaswamini*. In reality, this category is composed less of enemies as of competitors.

Parvateshwara of *Chandragupta* is an avowed patriot and a man of strong character. The way he fights Alexander leaves no room for doubting his valour, bravery, and patriotism. After the foreign invaders are driven back, well beyond the state frontiers, he gets ready with all his armed might to help Chandragupta fight the internal enemies of the nation. He is the chief instrument in destroying Nanda's power and capturing his territory. But once Chandragupta is in power, Chanakya believes that Parvateshwara is the greatest threat to his future. Parvateshwara controls half of the kingdom and this boded ill for the empire's future. Therefore, though endowed with valour, patriotism, and a strong character, Parvateshwara is considered Chandragupta's enemy and is vanquished.

Nanda's daughter Kalyani is Chandragupta's lover. In some places she has been acknowledged as being Chandragupta's wife and the mother of Bindusara. But Prasad sees her as Chandragupta's enemy, for the very reasons that Parvateshwara is an enemy. There was the possibility that Nanda's supporters would rise in rebellion with her as their leader. She was also seen as a competitor, and hence an enemy.

There was scope for this category of competitors in *Skandagupta* and *Dhruvaswamini* too, but Prasad chose not to present them. Purugupta, the enemy in *Skandagupta*, could have been portrayed as a competitor, even after total victory. But a large portion of Skanda's personality was that of a monk. By taking a vow of celibacy and anointing Purugupta the Crown prince, he ended the possibility of rivalry. Perhaps Prasad depicted this incident to affirm the historical fact of Purugupta becoming emperor after Skanda.

In *Dhruvaswamini* too the possibility of a rival group could have arisen had Ramagupta not been killed. Koma, the representative of the Shaka king, had also been killed, thus doing away with any possibility of a rival on the lines of Kalyani in *Chandragupta*. The opposing forces in the concluding sections of *Dhruvaswamini* are similar to those in the earlier plays. The Shaka king is an external aggressor, and Ramagupta and Shikharaswami

internal enemies. *Dhruvaswamini* is closer to *Chandragupta* than to *Skandagupta* in its categorization of inimical forces. Skandagupta has control over the kingdom, which the internal enemies wish to snatch away. But in *Chandragupta* and *Dhruvaswamini* power is already in the hands of the internal enemies Nanda, Ambhika, and Ramagupta.

The Villain and the Traitor

Internal enemies are clearly of two types. The first type is one who, while certainly being opposed to the hero, may also not be thinking of the 'best' interests of the country, either due to enmity with the hero or due to selfish interests. Yet this kind of enemy does not betray the nation knowingly and of his own accord; he is not a traitor. Duryodhana of *Sajjana* is vile, arrogant, and an enemy of the Pandavas; but he is not a traitor. Nanda of *Chandragupta* also falls into this category. He is unwilling to cooperate with Chandragupta, Chanakya, or Parvateshwara even for the welfare of the nation; yet he is not a traitor. He does not sell the honour and freedom of his country on purpose.

The other category of internal enemies is that of traitors. Jaichand of *Prayashcitta*, Kashyapa of *Janamejaya ka Nagayajna*, Purugupta, Bhatarka, Prapanchabuddhi, Ananta-devi, and the Buddhist abbots of *Skandagupta*, and Ambhika of *Chandragupta* fall into this category of traitors. They are treacherous people who sell their honour to foreigners for money. They

Chanakya

have different reasons for treason: Jaichand due to his enmity with Prithviraj; Purugupta, Bhatarka, and Anantadevi due to their enmity with Skanda, as well as greed for power and money; Prapanchabuddhi and the other Buddhist abbots due to religious hatred; Ambhika out of greed for wealth; and Parvateshwara due to his rebellious disposition.

Ramagupta of *Dhruvaswamini* also comes to an agreement with the enemies of his land. His deception, however, has some special features, and it appears to be a clever political move. Even the Shaka king does not know why Ramagupta accepts his demeaning proposal to send his wife Dhruvaswamini to him. Actually Ramagupta wanted to clear his way by destroying such opponents as Dhruvaswamini and Chandragupta. The killing of the valorous Chandragupta and the insulting end to Dhruvaswamini was a great loss to the country; but even the Shaka king was not aware of Ramagupta's treachery and considered it his easy victory.

Another rebel who differs from the others is Vijaya of *Skandagupta*. She joins hands with the traitors more on account of her hatred for Devasena than out of selfish interests. She does not gain anything, though she sacrifices her wealth, beauty, and youth. She does not work directly with foreigners but with traitors aiding foreign forces.

The treachery of an ordinary citizen, though harmful to the country, is perhaps not all that damaging. But when those entrusted with the security of the nation, and endowed with special powers to do so, barter away their country's interests, then the nation is doomed for certain. Jaichand, Ambhika, Purugupta, Anantadevi, Bhatarka, Ramagupta, and Shikharaswami are the authorities of the state in Prasad's plays. Their treachery is fatal to avowed patriots and common citizens alike.

It was because of Jaichand that Ghuri attacked Prithviraj Chauhan and was able to break the pillar that supported the country. It was due to Ambhika's treachery that Alexander could invade India and a patriot king like Parvateshwara was defeated. Had not the duo of Chanakya and Chandragupta and
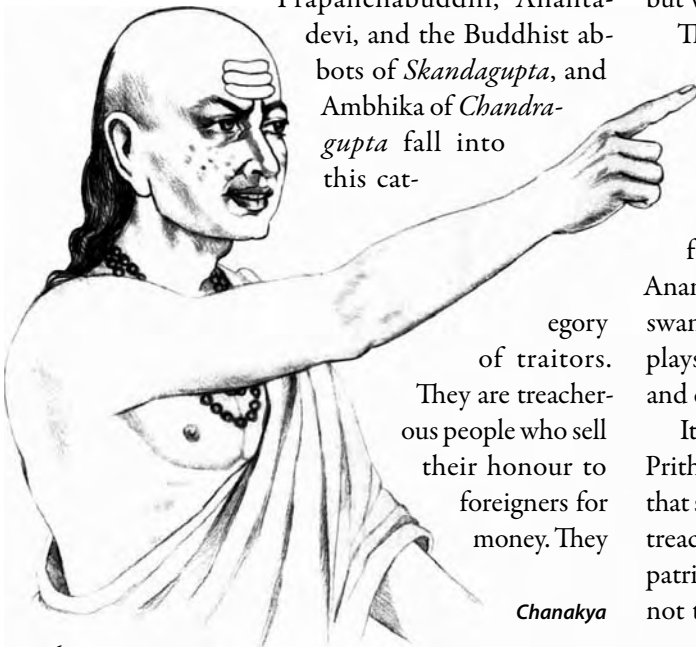
their allies turned active, India would have been trampled by Greek armies even after Alexander's death. Skandagupta had to struggle at every step due to the treachery of Purugupta, Anantadevi, and Bhatarka, and the common people had to endure unimaginable suffering and incur heavy losses.

Chandragupta's bravery and sense of duty thwarted the evil designs of Ramagupta and Shikharaswami. Else, the efforts of Chandragupta I and Samudragupta in driving away the Shakas, Kushanas, Huns, and other foreign invaders would have failed.

Prasad was deeply troubled by the treachery of the ruling class and those in power. He repeatedly presents details of the treachery of rulers to the public. He lived in British India, so there was no possibility then of the rulers being traitors, as they were foreigners. But Prasad could perhaps never forget that the freedom of Indian states had been sold to the English by so-called maharajas for the price of endless luxuries. On the other hand, social leaders, the rich and the reputed, businessmen and landlords who were the leaders of society, had sold themselves and their country to obtain honorific titles, land, and business contracts. Therefore, it was necessary for the common masses to be wary of these deceivers and be prepared to protect the nation by themselves. It could also be that he was alerting the nation to the need for vigilance in preserving the freedom that was to follow the struggle for independence. It has been seen that even after achieving constitutional independence, our leaders have sold out our national interests for personal gain. There can be no enemies bigger than those in power selling away the interests of the country.

Caste and Religious Conflict

In *Janamejaya ka Nagayajna* Kashyapa is angry with Janamejaya, a clear picture of the brahmana-kshatriya clash. As a consequence of this internal rift, Kashyapa joins hands with the Naga king and Janamejaya's enemy Takshaka and plans to kill his masters, the Aryan kshatriyas.

Somewhat on similar lines, in *Skandagupta* Prapanchabuddhi and the Buddhist sangha of Uttarakhanda help the enemies of the nation—Purugupta, Anantadevi, and Bhatarka. They take an enormous amount of money from the white Huns and agree to betray their country. In *Chandragupta* Nanda and Rakshasa are Buddhists and arch-enemies of the brahmanas. Probably, the contemporary communal clashes appeared very dangerous to Prasad, who could clearly see that any internal disturbance—be it due to caste, religion, or some other cause—could never bring happiness to the country. Foreign invaders take advantage of such disturbances and work with the minorities to make their oppressive rule strong and permanent. The people of the country neither realize that they have become weak and infirm because of internal feud nor see how otherwise ordinary enemies are exploiting them. This policy of 'divide and rule' has been portrayed by Prasad with great perspicacity: 'These unscrupulous demons divide the masses and gain strength by sometimes favouring the Buddhists and at other times following the Vaidikas. In the name of religion, the foolish public is made to dance to their tunes.'[1]

There is another aspect to this problem. The brahmanas were the uppermost class in Vedic society and had innumerable privileges—probably snatched away from them after the Mahabharata war—in the times of Janamejaya. Similarly, many of the privileges enjoyed by Buddhist abbots during the rule of Buddhist kings were no longer afforded them during the rule of the Gupta kings. The lethargic, comfort-seeking leaders of these communities wanted to regain their privileges and luxuries. Meanwhile, however, the kshatriyas and the Vaidikas had become more powerful. The aforementioned leaders agreed to help their enemies along with their own followers and were ready to betray their country.

(To be continued)

Reference

1. Jaishankar Prasad, *Prasad ke Sampurna Natak evam Ekanki* (Allahabad: Lokabharati, 2004), 633.

Terrorism: Understanding Its Mitigation

Pallavi Banerjee

ANY attempt at understanding the causation of and responses to terrorism runs the risk of oversimplifying a multifaceted matter that involves several perspectives. There are many factors at micro and macro levels affecting political violence generally, and terrorism specifically. Indeed, there is substantial agreement that the psychology of terrorism cannot be considered apart from political, historical, familial, group dynamic, organic, and even purely accidental, coincidental factors. Because of this inherent complexity, an attempt has been made here to identify the causes and then the mitigation of terrorism by analysing these factors at two levels, the micro and the macro. However, such a classification can only be artificial, as in real life the factors influence each other in a synergistic manner. Moreover, this article focuses on the mitigation of terrorism alone and not on other responses—to analyse the response of victims, for instance, and deal with the issues of trauma and resilience, would require a separate article.

Micro Level Analysis

Scientific research at micro level has focused on the study of personality variables of terrorists in order to contain terrorism by addressing individual psychopathologies and personality vulnerabilities. Psychology as a discipline has a long history of, and perhaps even a bias towards, trying to explain deviant behaviours as functions of psychopathology—mental disease, disorder, or dysfunction— or maladjusted personality syndromes.[1] As Schmid and Jongman noted in *Political Terrorism*, 'The chief assumption underlying many psychological "theories" ... is that the terrorist, in one way or the other, is not normal and that the insights from psychology and psychiatry are adequate keys to understanding.' In reality, psychopathology has proven to be, at best, only a modest risk factor for general violence, and all but irrelevant to understanding terrorism. In actual fact, the idea of terrorism as a product of mental disorder or psychopathy has been altogether discredited. Contrarily, it is clear that some of the core deficits common in psychopaths would likely impair their effective functioning in a terrorist role. Cooper asserts the same: 'Terrorism, like any other serious undertaking, requires dedication, perseverance, and certain selflessness. These are the many qualities that are lacking in the psychopaths.'[2] Most observers agree that although latent personality traits can certainly contribute to the decision of turning to violence, there is no single set of psychic attributes that can alone explain terrorist behaviour.

Another attempt at defending against terrorism has been made by drawing the socio-demographic profile of a typical terrorist. One of the most comprehensive efforts in this direction is the profile developed by Russell and Miller, based on a compilation of published data regarding over 350 individual terrorist cadres and leaders across 18 different terrorist groups active during the years 1966–76. The prototype derived from their work described an unmarried male, between 22 and 25 years of age, who is an urban resident, comes from an upper middle-class family, has some university education, and probably holds an extremist political philosophy.[3] Even the briefest reflection reveals that most individuals who fit that general description are not terrorists and would never commit an act of terrorist aggression. An equally grave problem that could re-

sult from its use is that there are and will be people who are planning and preparing to mount a terrorist attack who do *not* fit that profile. In fact, the belief that profiling can provide an effective defence also seriously underestimates the intelligence of terrorist organizations. Sophisticated terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda, actively seek to know the 'type' of person who would attract suspicion and then scout and use operators who defy that preconception.

Thus, no attempt at identifying and addressing a potential terrorist based on personality profiling would be feasible since the available research evidence indicates that no such consistency exists in the personality pattern—as Bandura argues in his general conclusion in this area: 'It requires conducive social conditions rather than monstrous people to produce heinous deeds.' If, therefore, terrorism is to be mitigated or even prevented, it is not the terrorist's personality that should be addressed, but prevailing socio-economic and political conditions.

Macro Level Analysis

Macro level studies—those concerning socio-politico-economic factors—approach the causation and mitigation of terrorism in terms of rational choice analyses of terrorism; that is, the propensity of an individual, as a rational decision-maker, to choose terrorism, among several available options, as the means to achieve his or her goals. This method is employed mainly because statistical data on terrorism is too sparse—it is particularly difficult to study the inclinations and motivational factors of a group which is not voluntarily available for sophisticated psychological assessment. Even if such studies were available, it is worth remembering that human beings do not always operate as rational decision-makers under all circumstances. However, in the absence of adequate statistical data, rational choice models seem to be the most dependable alternative to understanding this phenomenon.

The political debate about terrorism prevention is dominated by two seemingly opposed worries: 'How can we neutralize the threat coming from existing terrorists?' and 'How can we prevent people from becoming terrorists?' Each question is legitimate in its own right, yet the answers they suggest appear to point in different directions. The first goal, that of neutralizing threat, suggests symptom-related strategies—policies that fight terrorists; whilst the second goal, prevention, suggests cause-related strategies—policies that remove the causes of terrorism.

A model of terrorism prevention should ideally address both goals. One policy may achieve a high 'capture success' but create additional terrorists, whilst another may create few new terrorists while leaving society entirely exposed to them.

Deterrence: Symptom-related Policies

Politics has always been committed to fighting terrorism by using deterrence. This strategy has also been central in rational choice analyses of terrorism. Deterrence policy, by increasing the costs involved, aims at making terrorist acts difficult to undertake. These costs include both the material, such as those involved in collecting information and preparing for attacks, and the psychological, such as the dangers of being caught and the nature of the sentence. The toughness of the state's policy towards terrorism determines the costs. Toughness can relate either to the capture policy—the degree of defensive vigilance and control—or to the punishment policy—the nature and duration of the punishment. Policies have causal effects on people's mental states. For instance, a tough capture policy increases the probability that terrorists will be detained, thus neutralizing terrorist actions, but it may not affect the overall number of terrorists; this depends on whether 'deterrence effect' dominates or 'hate effect'.

'Deterrence effect' refers to the reduction in the total number of terrorists due to fear of capture and punishment. 'Hate effect' is the collective term used to denote the increase in the total number of terrorists and terrorist actions as a reaction to the toughness of policies. Both hate effect and deterrence effect increase as a result of a growing toughness in policy. At low and moderate levels, deterrence

effect is sensitive to the toughness in policy—a slight increase in toughness is reflected in a sharp decline in a person's decision to remain a terrorist and engage in terrorist endeavours. However, the increase in deterrence effect is slower at very high levels of toughness. For example, if the state already has a very tough policy for capturing and dealing with terrorists, then only intrinsically motivated terrorists are likely to remain in the group and they are unlikely to be discouraged by a slight increase in an already tough policy. Thus, under such conditions, a marginal increase in toughness is unlikely to significantly discourage terrorist activity, but such a condition *is* likely to influence hate effect more sensitively by making the perception of injustice towards the terrorists stronger. Therefore, a moderate level of toughness would seem the rational choice for the state to take up—an increase in toughness beyond this would lead to more hate effect than deterrence effect and thus increase both terrorist enrolment and activity.

However, there are certain disadvantages of targeting the symptom-related causes. Firstly, as stated above, terrorists who are intrinsically motivated are unlikely to be discouraged by a tough capture and punishment policy—on the contrary, tough policies may further instigate them by making the perceived injustice done to them seem greater. Secondly, a higher degree of defensive control leads to higher expenditure on the military forces and adversely affects the quality of life of the residents of the area by restricting their freedom. This is the case in the Kashmir Valley of India, where a large part of the country's income is spent on fighting insurgency and anti-state terrorist activity—the consequence being a very restricted life for the residents and a sharp decline in the tourism revenue of the state. Thirdly, there is a lack of precedence to show the effectiveness or failure of these symptom-related policies—the recent liquidation of the LTTE is a notable exception. The absence of any consistency in the matter makes the inference and prediction of terrorist activity difficult. Finally, since deterrence does nothing to address the causes of terrorism, its effect on terrorists is inconsequential in the long run. So deterrence, the favoured political stand with respect to terrorism, has its own disadvantages. Therefore, other alternatives need to be looked at.

Alternatives to Deterrence

In contrast to deterrence policy, Bruno S Frey and Simon Luechinger have discussed ways of making terrorism less attractive by adopting policies that can thwart the goal-attainment of terrorist organizations.[4] The ultimate aims of terrorism are, among others, the redistribution of power and property rights as well as the extortion of rents. In order to achieve these, terrorists have three main tactical goals: (i) seeking publicity to make their cause more widely known; (ii) destabilizing the polity, eroding the political system's legitimacy; and (iii) damaging the economy in order to make the state yield to their demands.

Frey suggests that the authorities should refrain from attributing a particular terrorist incident to any one group. Rather, they should stress that many different actors can be possible perpetrators. Such an information policy markedly reduces the benefits terrorist groups derive from publicity. The state should also actively interact with the media to ensure that they do not make terrorist leaders appear like heroes or prejudice the minds of the public about the affected community or religion. Such a goal is difficult to achieve in a free state which enjoys freedom of expression.

Frey and Luechinger propose that a country can be immunized against terrorist attacks by decentralizing activity, both with respect to the polity and the economy. The basic idea is that a polity with many different centres is difficult to destabilize. A single centre is, in this case, less essential and therefore also of less symbolic value: if one of the centres is hit by a terrorist attack, other centres can take over its tasks. Thus the attraction of violent actions on the part of terrorists is diminished. However, decentralizing polity is unlikely to be an attractive option to the bureaucrats since it is liable to undermine their power.

Other alternatives to deterrence policy, built on the 'benevolence strategy', have been forwarded by Frey and Luechinger. These tend to produce a *positive sum game*—a 'win-win' situation—among the interacting parties and thereby contribute to a peaceful political environment. In contrast, the deterrence system is based on threats; it therefore tends to produce a *negative sum game*—a 'lose-lose' situation—and leads to further conflict.

An effective way to fight terrorism is to raise the *opportunity costs*; these concern the benefits gained by potential terrorists by not engaging in terrorism. The higher the opportunity cost, the lower the willingness to commit terrorist activities. This approach differs fundamentally from traditional deterrence policy, which seeks to raise *material* costs. Four specific strategies to directly raise opportunity costs are as follows:

Increasing Income in Peaceable Occupations · An obvious possibility for raising opportunity costs is to increase the income of peaceable occupations. The more an individual can gain from participating in an ordinary activity, the less will he or she be inclined to engage in terrorism. The same result can also be achieved by the general economic development of an area, leading to more opportunities for the masses. The recent experience with Palestinian suicide bombers would suggest, however, that this solution has only a marginal effect.

Visits to Other Countries or Centres for Higher Education · Persons inclined to terrorist ideas and actions can be invited to visit foreign countries or universities and research institutes, which can offer them the opportunity of discussing their ideologies with intellectuals. The guests may, moreover, pursue their own studies. It would be expected that a confrontation with the liberal ideas existing in such places of learning would mellow their terrorist inclinations; at the very least, the potential terrorists would have access to new and radically different ideas, compared to those coming from within a closed circle of other terrorists. According to Hardin's economic theory of knowledge, due to the high cost of discovering and verifying knowledge for themselves, people typically rely on sources of authority and on the society in which they spend most of their lives; a person also has little incentive to acquire any knowledge or belief that is at odds with the beliefs of this society.[5] Extremist views are therefore more likely to flourish in isolated groups of like-minded people; what is more, they serve as norms of exclusion. As a corollary, extremism reinforces segregation and *vice versa*. Terrorism as well as deterrence enhance segregation and thereby strengthen cohesiveness within smaller groups. Thus, invitation to centres for higher learning leads to a higher opportunity cost of terrorism and helps in breaking up the vicious circle of segregation and extremism. Moreover, discussion has an extremely positive effect on subjects' willingness to cooperate.

Principal Witness Programmes · Persons engaged in terrorist movements can be offered incentives such as money, reduced punishment, and a secure future life if they are prepared to leave the organization they are involved with and are prepared to provide information about it and its projects. A member's opportunity costs of remaining a terrorist are thereby increased. This method has already been successfully used, for example, in the case of the *Brigate Rosse*, or Red Brigades, in Italy; the Red Army Faction in Germany; and Direct Action in France. The implementation of this principal witness programme has turned out to be an overwhelming success till now.

Contact, Discussion, and Political Participation · Terrorists can be involved in a discussion process that takes their goals and grievances seriously and tries to see whether compromises are feasible. Moreover, terrorists can be granted access to the normal political process. This lowers the costs of pursuing the political goal by legal non-violent means and consequently raises the opportunity costs of terrorism. This is not a utopian solution. In the Netherlands, for example, even terrorist sympathizers have free access to the media. The last terrorist campaign in Switzerland ended with a direct democratic decision on the disputed issue. There are quite a number of cases in which

former 'terrorists' later become regular politicians and some, such as Nelson Mandela, have even been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Such a strategy has several advantages over other anti-terrorist policies:

(i) Due to a wider scope of opportunities outside of terrorist activities, a person's dependence on the terrorist group is reduced. Exit is facilitated.

(ii) A conflict between terrorist activities and other activities is created, producing tensions within the terrorist organization. Nobody knows who will succumb to the outside attractions and become a 'traitor'. This diminishes the effectiveness of the terrorist group. In contrast, a deterrence policy strengthens solidarity among the group members.

(iii) Interaction between terrorists and outside people and groups is turned into a positive-sum interaction. The chances of finding a peaceful solution are improved.

However, there are a few major weaknesses in the effort to raise opportunity costs for terrorists:

(i) The incentives created are often insufficient to affect terrorists. This may be especially true for highly motivated or fanatical terrorists. In this case, the strategy would require, in order to be effective, extreme incentives and would entail considerable costs. The incentives are therefore unlikely to be effective in encouraging the hard core of terrorist organizations to participate in more legal activities. But they may prove successful in restraining those on the *periphery* of the terrorist organizations from pursuing illegal activities. Without the aid of this peripheral group, the supporters of terrorism, the hard core of the terrorist organizations will at most be able to undertake only low-scale terrorist activities.

(ii) The leaders of terrorist movements may undertake a counterstrategy, by offering similarly appreciated alternatives or by threatening dire punishment, or they may act strategically by sending out some trusted members as 'principal witnesses'. But such counterstrategies are costly for the terrorist movement.

(iii) Educational institutions, particularly those outside of the state, may be unwilling to accommo-date potential terrorists on security grounds. This can be a major hindrance to presenting them with the liberal ideas existing in such places of learning.

(iv) The benevolence strategy could create perverse incentives, in which some individuals are induced to engage in terrorism in order to receive the future rewards of then abandoning them. In many cases, the implementation of positive incentives is more successful at promoting cooperation than deterrent threats. Following the same line of reasoning, one could argue that the benevolence strategy induces entry because exit is facilitated. Rational actors, anticipating the ease of exit, may be more inclined to join terrorists in the first place.

(v) The strategy could be rejected as being immoral. It may be thought that terrorists were being rewarded for their illegal and often heinous acts. This may sometimes be true, but it should be kept in mind that there have been many cases of terrorists becoming fully integrated back into society. In such cases, the argument loses much of its force.

The anti-terrorism policy proposed here has some features in common with the policy of fighting terrorism by alleviating the causes. However, a crucial difference between the two policies is that the one proposed here can be adopted by governments not initially involved in the situation, and even by private persons and organizations.

Cause-related Policies

Unlike the deterrence policies, cause-related policies aim at reducing the inclination towards terrorism using measures that are proactive rather than reactive. They try to prevent people from becoming terrorists in the first place. It may be helpful here to briefly look at the causes of terrorism in the Indian context, as independent India has had to face terrorism of various kinds. B Raman has discussed some of the chief causes of insurgencies and terrorist movements that have afflicted the Indian nation:[6]

Political Causes · The political factors that lead to insurgency and terrorism include the failure of the government to control large-scale illegal

immigration from neighbouring countries and the inability of the government to fulfil the demand for economic benefits for the residents of a state, as in Assam and Tripura.

Economic Causes · These include such factors as the absence of land reforms, rural unemployment, and the exploitation of landless labourers by land owners. These economic grievances and perceptions of gross social injustice have given rise to ideological terrorist groups such as the various Marxist and Maoist outfits operating under different names—Andhra Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal are the major affected states.

Ethnic Causes · Feelings of ethnic separateness in a community, as in Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur.

Religious Causes · In the 1980s some Sikh elements in Punjab took to terrorism demanding the creation of an independent state called Khalistan for the Sikhs. In Jammu and Kashmir, Muslims belonging to different organizations took to terrorism for conflicting objectives—such as independence for the state and merger with Pakistan. While those who want an independent state project their struggle as a separatist one, those wanting a merger with Pakistan project it as a religious struggle.

Tornell[7] provides a model that describes terrorist activities as being initiated by groups that are unhappy with the current economic status, yet unable to bring about the drastic political and institutional changes that would improve their situation. Such groups with limited access to opportunities may believe it rational to engage in terrorist activities. The result is a pattern of reduced economic activity and increased terrorism. In contrast, an alternative environment can emerge where access to economic resources is more abundant and terrorism is reduced. It has been found that for democratic, high-income countries, economic recessions can provide the spark for increased terrorist activities. The causes cited above with respect to India do seem to support Tornell's theory except for the religious and ethnic factors, which may again be in-

directly affected by economic conditions. Thus, to target the causes of terrorism, some of the policies that can be employed by the state include raising the standard of living of the area, fighting poverty, and improving levels of education. In the case of developing countries, the kind and extent of their developmental policies should be looked into, and in the case of international terrorism, the kind and extent of the political and economic relations with other countries facing the same problem is of vital importance. India's success in bringing Sikh terrorism in Punjab under control might not have been possible without the valuable intelligence inputs received from the agencies of many other countries. Some of the significant successes in different countries against Al-Qaeda were apparently possible due to increased intelligence-sharing without reservations.

Other strategies that Raman lists are as follows:[8]

(i) A good grievances-detection, monitoring, and redressal machinery should be maintained so that the build-up of grievances or feelings of anger and alienation in any community can be detected early on, and the political leadership alerted in time to address them. Intelligence agencies play an important role in this regard.

(ii) An objective and balanced analysis of terrorists and their activities is required in order to avoid over-assessing their strengths and capabilities. Without this there is a risk of over-reaction by counter-terrorism agencies, thereby aggravating the feeling of alienation within the affected community and driving more people into the arms of terrorists. Such analysis is particularly difficult in the case of human intelligence. For every genuine source who gives correct intelligence, there are often two or three spurious sources who out of greed for money, or at the instance of the terrorists themselves, give false information. This tends to make security forces either overreact or take wrong action, leading to an aggravation of terrorism.

(iii) The state should constantly emphasize to the public not to look upon an entire community

or religion with suspicion simply because some of its people have taken to terrorism. The positive aspects of the affected community or religion should be highlighted to prevent the build-up of a negative image in the eyes of the public, which only aggravates segregation and hostility.

(iv) It is extremely important to observe human rights during counter-terrorism operations. Incidents of state-sponsored terrorist acts in the name of counter-terrorism programmes are not rare in world history. Such heinous crimes perpetrated by the state only serve to reinforce terrorism manyfold.

Politico-economic Considerations

Do cause-related strategies and the policy of offering alternatives to terrorists have any hope in politics? At present, the chances are rather slim. As discussed, the strategies suggested tend to produce a 'positive sum game'. However, the unilateral use of violence or force may lead to a greater benefit for the terrorists in the absence of a violent reaction on the part of the state. A peaceful solution to a conflict is therefore plagued by the collective action problem—that is, a pursuit of the same goal by more than one group. Several conditions for a cooperative solution often remain unmet. Without credible commitments from both sides, communication, which is crucial for cooperation, is difficult to maintain. Moreover, there is no accurate information regarding the costs and benefits of a peaceful strategy prior to its implementation. The concerned parties are heterogeneous in regard to their information and preferences, and do not share generalized norms of reciprocity and trust. Thirdly, monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms are difficult to sustain, because of the covert nature of terrorist and counter-terrorist activities.

Even if the benevolence strategy leads to a superior outcome for the targeted society as a whole, the government may prefer a deterrence strategy based on threats. Two major organizations in society, the police and the army, must expect to lose out in operating a benevolence strategy, as the interests of

these groups are clearly aligned against such an approach. They would receive fewer funds and would no longer profit from a deterrence policy in which they played a crucial role. Thus, the politically defined costs of a deterrence policy differ markedly from those economically defined. The government is likely to favour the well-organized groups, the army and the police, at the expense of the remaining population and may prefer a deterrence policy because they can therewith demonstrate to the population that they are determined to 'fight terrorism at all costs'. The macho image may help them win elections, especially if there is no open discussion of the merits and demerits of the various other strategies available.

In contrast to the utility of a deterrence policy, the benefits of alternative strategies are not directly attributed to the government in power. A benevolence strategy reduces the decision-making power of the politicians, especially if the conflict is settled by way of an open discussion and a direct democratic decision. Glaeser argues that politicians supply hatred if hatred makes a particular politician's policies more appealing.[9] Again, perpetuation of terrorist activity in an area helps to demarcate it as a terrorism-prone zone and thus leads to a continuous flow of grants in the name of anti-terrorism programmes. Then, the vested interests of the people at the helm of both the state and the terrorist organizations may sometimes lead to the perpetuation of terrorist activities. Such incidents of state-facilitated terrorism are not rare.

The alternatives to deterrence have the best chance of being undertaken when deterrence policy has failed; in such times of crises, the various involved groups may turn to unorthodox policies. Precisely for this reason, it is both difficult and counter to the interests of politicians to implement any unconventional strategies, even though they may bring about beneficial results in the long run. But for counter-terrorist activity to be successful all options need to be carefully weighed and a balanced action-plan implemented. ❧

(References on page 579)

War and Non-violence in the Bhagavadgita

Dr Jeffery D Long

DOES the Bhagavadgita, the ancient and influential Hindu scripture that Mahatma Gandhi called his 'dictionary of daily reference',[1] support war? Or is the Gita's central message compatible with pacifism? This article will argue that projections of Western, Christian-influenced positions on war and non-violence—such as just war theory and pacifism—onto the Gita involve inevitable distortions and misunderstandings about the ways in which both war and non-violence were understood in ancient India. Specifically, such interpretations of the Gita operate from a universalist understanding of ethical injunctions regarding war and non-violence: that the same rules of action apply to all people in all circumstances. This peculiarly Western assumption is largely foreign to Indic traditions, in which the concept of *svadharma*—the particular duty of the individual in particular situations—tends to be the central concern. This paper will also argue that the Gita's complex teaching on war and non-violence can only be understood in connection with the Hindu idea of different stages of life and spiritual evolution, to which different ethical codes are appropriate, and that Krishna's criticism of Arjuna stems not from a just war theory, but from a transcendental conception of reality of which Arjuna's compassionate despair falls short. The ideal of ahimsa, to which the Indic traditions point—including the tradition that finds expression in the Gita—is not an ideal of simply refraining from harm due to some divine command or injunction. It is both a consequence of and a means to the realization of a state of consciousness in which all distinction of 'I and mine' is transcended and in which one makes no differentiation between the suffering of 'self' and the suffering of 'others'. From such a perspective, the compassion of Arjuna for his teachers and relatives on the field of battle is still rooted in the ego and body-consciousness, and so is deficient.

The Context of the Bhagavadgita

For those less conversant with Indic traditions, let me briefly outline the literary context of the Gita and the issues that often arise in the course of its interpretation in a non-Hindu setting. The Bhagavadgita, or 'Song of the Blessed One'—lovingly called the Gita, 'the Song', by many Hindus—is a relatively brief discourse that occurs in a much, *much* longer epic text called the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata is a vast ocean of a text. It can be compared to the Bible inasmuch as it is very sacred to the community in which it has been preserved—the Hindu community—and also inasmuch as it constitutes a whole literature unto itself. Like the Bible, the Mahabharata has been the inspiration for numerous other literary works—poems, plays, philosophical treatises, and songs—as well as paintings and sculptures, often displayed in the context of a Hindu *mandir*, temple. Like the Bible, the Mahabharata contains material spanning a variety of genres, from straightforward narrative to philosophical discourse to legal text. The comparison with the Bible only fails inasmuch as the Mahabharata is only one among many sacred texts of the Hindu tradition—and not even the most sacred, that status being reserved for the Shruti, the Vedas.[2] But it is nevertheless a widely revered and seemingly inexhaustible source of inspiration for Hindu popular culture. There is even a Mahabharata television series, which was first broadcast in the nineteen eighties and is now available on DVD.

Within the Mahabharata, the Gita would best

be classified as a dialogue on the topic of dharma. Dharma, one of the most difficult of Sanskrit terms to translate, is a word with a range of meanings that encompass truth, cosmic law, justice, and social duty. This relatively tiny snippet from the Mahabharata came to be held in reverence in the classical period of Indian philosophy—from roughly the second to the twelfth century of the Common Era—when *bhashya*s, commentaries, were written upon it by such great acharyas, authoritative teachers, as Shankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva. Each one of these teachers was the founder of an influential system of Vedanta, or Hindu theology.[3] It was the regard in which these teachers held the Gita that also contributed to its current high status.

This status is such that the Gita is sometimes called the *Gitopanishad*, a name that places it on the same level as the most sacred of Hindu texts: the Upanishads, the final portion of the Vedas, on which Vedanta is based.[4] One possible reason for the high regard in which this text is held is that, despite its brevity, it manages to consolidate and synthesize all of the major trends in Indic philosophy that were current at the time of its composition—right around the turn of the era, some time between the second centuries BCE and CE. It is also presented as the word of God, its chief interlocutor being a most revered avatara, divine incarnation, Bhagavan Sri Krishna. So in terms of its spiritual authority, the Gita is probably the closest thing to a bible in modern Hinduism.

Within the context of the Mahabharata, the Gita occurs just moments prior to the great battle towards which all the previous action of the text has been converging; for the Mahabharata, like the *Iliad*, is a war epic. It narrates the tale of two branches of a royal family in ancient northern India—the Kauravas and the Pandavas—who are fighting for supremacy. The Pandavas are the rightful heirs to the throne and the 'good guys' of the epic, despite the fact that they all have very real human flaws, and sometimes fall short of the ideal of dharma. The Kauravas, led by their wicked eldest brother Duryodhana, are the villains who have dis-

inherited their heroic cousins, the Pandavas, using deception and trickery. When the Gita is about to begin, repeated efforts to bring about a peace accord have failed and war is inevitable. Each side has assembled a vast army on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, where the matter is to be decided. Arjuna, one of the Pandava brothers and their greatest warrior, has the job of leading the charge. He directs his charioteer and best friend Krishna to lead him between the two armies. Looking upon the warriors that are assembled on both sides, Arjuna is overcome with despondency. He is not frightened for himself. His heroism has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout the course of the epic. Nor has he suddenly become a pacifist. But realizing that there are good and noble people on both sides of the conflict—many of whom are his dear friends and relatives—he is filled with sorrow, knowing that many of these good and noble people will die.

War and the Gita

It is at this point that things become controversial in the interpretation of the Gita. For Krishna—rather shockingly for people who associate Hinduism with Gandhi and his ideal of non-violence—reprimands Arjuna for losing his nerve on the eve of battle. 'Why this cowardice in a time of crisis, Arjuna? The coward is ignoble, shameful, and foreign to the ways of heaven. Don't yield to impotence! It is unnatural in you! Banish this petty weakness from your heart. Rise to the fight, Arjuna!'[5] It is precisely in order to console his friend and to inspire him to fight the battle at hand that Krishna begins to engage Arjuna in a discourse on the fundamental truths of Vedanta. At the end of the Gita we find Krishna has been successful. Arjuna leads the charge and the battle gets underway, almost as if the entire conversation that is the Gita had never happened.

So much at odds with this warlike setting does the spiritual teaching of Krishna appear that some scholars have speculated that the Gita is a later interpolation, that it was slipped into the text of the Mahabharata by subsequent compilers who wished

to subvert the popular epic in order to communicate a far more profound lesson in non-violence and detachment—attitudes which, were they to be adopted on a sufficient scale, would prevent wars like the one the Mahabharata describes.[6]

In the minds of many modern interpreters, particularly non-Hindu interpreters, the Gita is a deeply disturbing text. Gandhi's great love for the book, and his well-known and heroic commitment to non-violence as an instrument for political and social change, which has inspired such non-violent revolutionaries as Martin Luther King and César Chavez, seem to be at odds. Is there not a contradiction between the ideal of non-violence and a text in which God—in human form—tells a human being to rise up and slaughter members of his own family on a battlefield? Some Western scholars have been shocked by Krishna's frank endorsement of combat. And Christian missionaries have made much of contrasting the seemingly bloodthirsty Krishna with the benevolent Jesus, the 'Prince of Peace'.[7]

I would like to argue, however, that such responses are off the mark and, at least in some cases, more than a little hypocritical. When a modern Western reader picks up a copy of the Gita and begins to read the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna without any background knowledge of what warfare meant in ancient India, prior to the large-scale arrival of either Christianity or Islam, he will inevitably project onto the text his own, contemporary cultural assumptions, and be puzzled, perhaps even outraged, by the advice that Krishna gives. 'I thought Hinduism was supposed to be non-violent,' he may think. 'What a terrible religion!' Projecting contemporary Western realities onto the text, a completely distorted picture will appear in his mind, bearing little resemblance to the message that the text is seeking to convey. If our imaginary reader does not throw the text down in disgust, but reads on, his puzzlement will only grow, as he sees Krishna at a later point in the text recommending such virtues as 'non-violence, truth, absence of anger, disengagement, peace, loyalty, compassion for creatures, lack of greed, gentleness, modesty,

[and] reliability'.[8] Is this the same Krishna from the beginning of the text?

The reader, living in the atomic age, having in mind a situation like that of the US during the time of the Vietnam War, in which many protested at having to participate in a war they regarded as unjust—or war of any kind, for that matter—or the situation that we are living through today, of again being involved in a modern war in which innocent life is inevitably destroyed, will recoil from the Gita as a text that fails to question or to condemn such activity. Arjuna will remind such a reader of himself, recoiling from the intrinsically horrible nature of war. Krishna's advice will either anger or puzzle such a reader, who expects to find support for the ideal of non-violence in a Hindu text that Gandhi himself held in higher esteem than any other scripture. The reader who has lived through the terrible events of 9/11 may even be disturbingly reminded of terrorism and suicide bombers who believe that their crimes are divinely ordained. 'The doors of heaven open for warriors who rejoice to have a battle like this thrust on them perchance,' Krishna says (2.32).

But traditional Hindu warfare was a very different affair from modern warfare. If one is an attentive student of Hindu epic literature, one will find that the warfare depicted in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata is very strictly governed by a code of honour. The duty, dharma, of the kshatriya warrior, is quite well defined in these texts and in the *Dharmashastra*s, Hindu legal literature. Whenever the characters in these texts, even the heroes, run afoul of this code of honour, they are reprimanded. In some cases, they are even cursed. Not unlike the Christian conceptions of just war and Islamic conceptions of jihad, the war fought by the kshatriya must be fought for just reasons and must be fought only between combatants. Attacking of non-combatants—innocent civilians—is forbidden, and a matter of grave dishonour. The degree to which this code of honour is not merely a literary device, but was actually observed in ancient Hindu society, is attested to in the story of a foreign traveller—the

Greek ambassador, Megasthenes. Seeing two armies fighting a fierce battle, Megasthenes noticed, in the adjacent field, only yards away, a farmer with his ox, ploughing his field, to all appearances completely unconcerned with the fierce battle raging nearby.[9] The farmer was safe. As a non-combatant, he knew the fighting warriors were not interested in him. Nor, apparently, was he interested in them!

The kshatriya code is, in fact, far more circumscribed than either the Christian idea of just war or the Islamic idea of jihad. Christianity and Islam, religions of the Abrahamic family of monotheism, typically see ethical injunctions as having a universal character. So a just war is a just war for *all* Christians. A Christian who accepts the just war theory is at least implicitly accepting responsibility for fighting in such a war, should the occasion arise. Similarly, in Islam, the obligation to fight a jihad, a war of defence against enemies seeking the eradication of the Muslim faith, is an obligation that binds *all* able-bodied adult Muslim men. But only a kshatriya is obligated to fight in a just war, by just means, against other kshatriyas. Warfare is simply not an issue for the remainder of the Hindu population. A non-kshatriya does not have to agonize about whether to accept a just war theory or to be a pacifist. Not being a warrior, he is a pacifist by default. Similarly, and more to the point, a good kshatriya has no business agonizing about whether or not to engage in a just war. He has no choice in the matter. This is his duty, his dharma, and this is precisely what Krishna is reminding Arjuna.

In terms, then, of the perennial debate in peace and conflict studies in the West between pacifism and just war theory, the Gita can be said to endorse both—and neither—of these approaches to the question of war. In keeping with the *Dharmashastra*s, it recognizes that different duties obtain for different people in different times and places.

The Western reader needs to bear the whole of this cultural context in mind when reading the Gita, in order to avoid a cruel and distorting interpretation of the text and the religion in which it is a sacred scripture. Krishna is not encouraging

Arjuna to fight in a modern war, where he has to drop incendiary bombs on centres of civilian population. He is not encouraging him to fight in a war like that in Vietnam or Iraq—or even like World War II, in America the so-called 'good war'—waged against entire populations without regard for age, gender, or disability. By the standards of Hindu war epics, there is nothing good to be said about such dishonourable conduct. An ancient kshatriya of the Hindu epics would say that modern warfare is *adharmika*—contrary to duty, and against the grain of the natural order. The war in which Arjuna is being encouraged to fight is, by comparison, akin to an athletic contest—albeit a contest fought to the death—a fair fight, involving only consenting adults.

Polemically minded Western authors seeking to criticize Hinduism by pointing to the warrior ethos in the Gita would do well to pay attention to the kind of warfare it enjoins. Not only is Arjuna's battle a far cry from modern warfare, it is also a far cry from that in the Hebrew Bible—the Christian Old Testament—in which God commands the armies of Israel to kill every man, woman, child, and animal in the cities of the promised land that he is giving to them.[10] Arjuna is not being told by Krishna to slaughter unarmed men, women, children, and animals. He is being told to combat other armed warriors—some of whom, like the mighty Bhishma, are more than a match for him.

The Higher Teaching

But can the question of war and non-violence in the Gita be resolved—or rather, *dissolved*—so easily, though? The issue does not arise at all in the commentaries of any of the great pre-modern acharyas. This is presumably because they shared the Gita's view of dharma—that there is no such thing as a 'question' of warfare versus non-violence in our modern sense because every non-kshatriya in ancient Hindu society was expected to live a life of non-violence, and every kshatriya was expected to be prepared to engage in warfare, with other kshatriyas, should the need arise. This state of af-

fairs was so taken for granted in ancient India that in those places where we see ahimsa—non-violence in thought, word, and deed—emphasized, it means far more than simple non-engagement in warfare or non-killing of other human beings—a universal expectation for non-kshatriyas—but non-violent behaviour towards animals, insects, and even, in some cases, plants. Non-violence in the modern Western sense, typically seen as a heroic act of refusal to participate in warfare, as embodied in such phenomena as conscientious objection, is simply the way good and civilized people were expected to behave in ancient India.

The issue does arise, however, in modern Hinduism, where the notion of *jati*, caste by birth, has become the object of widespread—and I would say justified—criticism. In any case, Hindu scriptures say that in the Kali Yuga, the period of history through which we are now living, caste is no longer a valid category, since castes have become mixed, and people no longer follow the professions of their ancestors. In such a situation, the question of just war as a universal option begins to emerge, for anyone could conceivably fulfil the kshatriya dharma, regardless of birth caste. Gandhi argued, as have other Hindu reformers, that although birth caste may no longer be a valid category, caste can be seen instead in terms of innate qualities, particular to the individual, as described in the Gita.[11] A kshatriya is therefore anyone who is, among other things,

Arjuna, by Shanta Devi

courageous, constant, and resourceful.

In my view, though, the kind of war that Arjuna was enjoined by Krishna to fight is no longer an option. Modern warfare is utterly *adharmika* by the standards set by the *Dharmashastra*s and the epics. This means, therefore, that non-violence is enjoined for all. This was the view that Gandhi held as well. The devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or of 9/11 in the US, is not something that a truly dharmic civilization can countenance. Humanity has reached a point of technological development in which its moral, dharmic imperative is to find a peaceful solution to its many disagreements. The idea here is not that people have no right to defend themselves from violent attack, or that nations do not have a duty to protect their citizens. But humanity *as a whole* needs to work towards creating a set of conditions that minimize—and ideally eliminate—the occurrence of such situations. Otherwise, we risk self-annihilation.

Gandhi addressed the issue of war raised by the Gita essentially by setting it aside as irrelevant. He famously said: 'Try following the teaching of the Gita. Live as it teaches you to live. Then see if you are capable of harming any living being.' Gandhi believed that someone who practised the yoga of *karma-phala-vairagya*, the discipline laid out in the Gita of 'detachment from the fruits of action', of seeing and serving God in all beings, and of regular meditation and devotional activities such as *rama-nama*,

chanting the names of God, would inevitably and naturally become a being endowed with moral purity, non-violence, and compassion.

Other contemporary Hindu thinkers, such as Swami Jyotirmayananda, have read the Mahabharata, and therefore the Gita, as a symbolic text, describing not a physical war, but the 'war within'—what Muslim scholars have called the 'greater jihad' and what I have heard Christians call 'spiritual warfare'—the inner struggle with ignorance and the ego that all aspirants on the path to God-realization must undergo.[12] In fact, there are a variety of hints in the text of the Gita that suggest such a symbolic interpretation. The thirteenth chapter opens with the straightforward assertion that 'the field [*kshetra*—also the word used to denote the field of battle] is the body'.[13]

Krishna also tells Arjuna to arise and slay his true enemies: greed, hatred, and delusion. Finally, the entire discourse takes place in a chariot. The *Katha Upanishad* presents the detailed image of a chariot as a metaphor for the physical body, which carries the rider, who is the soul, and a driver, who is the mind, and is drawn by horses, which represent the senses. Gita, chapter two, verse nineteen, is virtually identical to *Katha Upanishad*, chapter two, verse nineteen, which may be a hint at a link between these two texts. Significantly, the verse reads, in its Gita version: 'He who thinks this Self a killer and he who thinks it killed, both fail to understand; it does not kill, nor is it killed' (2.19). If the warfare of the Gita, and indeed of the entire Mahabharata, is metaphorical and spiritual, then the question of warfare is again dissolved, or at least deferred, against an assumption that the way of life enjoined for all human beings is one governed by the principle of ahimsa.

Whether one takes Gandhi's practical approach of simply living the teaching of the Gita—setting aside the question of war and non-violence as irrelevant—or Swami Jyotirmayananda's approach of regarding the conflict as symbolic of the struggle to live that teaching, the point is that both modern Hindu masters direct the attention of the reader away from the conflict that forms the setting of Krishna's teaching and towards the teaching itself. If we are attentive to that teaching, yet another level of Krishna's advice to Arjuna emerges.

It is significant that the first truth to which Krishna directs Arjuna in order to cure him of his despondency is the truth of the immortality and immutability of the Atman, the Self. Again: 'He who thinks this Self a killer and he who thinks it killed, both fail to understand; it does not kill, nor is it killed.' Arjuna's words *seem* wise, Krishna at one point says, because he is speaking from compassion. He does not want to see these brave warriors killed, especially his family members. But from the perspective of Vedanta such compassion is ultimately defective, being based on the ego and the false consciousness born of maya, which identifies the Self with the physical body. This is why Arjuna is said to be deluded.[14]

Arjuna is compassionate towards *these* people because they are his biological relatives. In other words, their bodies are related to his. But what about all of the warriors and wild animals and demons and other creatures that Arjuna has slain in the Mahabharata up to this point? Are they not also worthy of compassion? True compassion, paradoxically, is the fruit of *detachment*—detachment from this body and the temporary identity in which the Atman resides in this lifetime. True ahimsa is impartial, encompassing all beings. It comes from seeing God everywhere. It is not the ultimately egocentric and superficial compassion that arises because a particular person is related to *me*—which really only means 'that body is related to my body'. Are not *all* beings interrelated? Is the Self not ultimately one? This is the higher truth to which Krishna's teaching directs Arjuna—and the reader. Arjuna's despair in the face of battle arises from a noble sentiment, but not noble enough for an aspirant on the spiritual path. It is this higher, universal compassion to which Krishna's teaching directs him. The battle is merely the occasion for its expression.

Vedanta and the Search for Truth

Swami Sarvagatananda

THE Sanskrit word *vid* means 'to know' and *veda* means 'knowledge'. Vedanta is the culmination of knowledge; the theme of Vedanta is wisdom. Lately it has been called Hinduism. It can be considered as the oldest known living philosophical system and has had its evolution with human understanding and faith. Vedanta, over the ages, has established itself as the scientific basis of spiritual life by accepting the thoughts and ideas of all religions and by finding the common theme and harmony in them. We will here explore the evolution of Vedanta and the ideas pertaining to it.

The books of the Veda are a compilation of empirical observations and religious hymns of the early inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent. The compositions are supposed to have been created about four thousand years ago. The material is organized into four books. They principally portray the religious practices and ritualistic procedures of the inhabitants. Many of the inhabitants were animists and were fascinated by nature's ways. They worshipped nature in all her forms: as the thunder, the clouds, the rain, the sun, the moon, plants, rivers, and many others. These were objects of amazement and adoration to them. They believed that the human being had a special relationship to the objects and forces in nature. They composed prayers adoring nature and her manifestations and offered sacrifices in their honour. They had a sincere desire and curiosity to explore the truth of Creation and tried to analyse every scene to the best of their ability.

A Ceaseless Quest

In course of time there developed many schools of thought, offering a diversity of rituals to appease different forces of nature. Possibly a group of people would start a sacrifice and other groups would ask questions like, 'What are you doing? What are all these gods that you worship? How do you explain all these deities that you invoke?' In order to resolve such issues they convened a scholarly conference in which various points of view could be freely expressed and analysed. Through long discussions and serious analysis they concluded that their gods were not isolated powers or separate entities; they were many faces of the same cosmic power and contained the same cosmic energy. They established further that all the power of the gods came from a single cosmic source, leading to the statement: '*Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti*; there is one Truth, sages call it variously.' One cosmic force expresses itself in manifold ways.

Throughout the entire Vedanta literature the principal question is: 'Is it true?' This rhetorical question can be posed at all levels of our cognition and it immediately helps expose our ignorance. The Truth is unknown and hidden somewhere. When we search for the Truth we get lost. The Indo-Aryan sages, called rishis, focused their search on the individual: 'Who is this human being? How do you identify a human personality? What lies behind all our activities?' That search never stopped. No final answer has yet been reached. Many rishis, saints,

and sages discovered Truth from the point of view of their own illumination. They presented their discovery to us in different ways. In Vedanta we learn from all saints. Vedanta respects all those who make important spiritual observations. It is inclusive.

Vedanta is similar to the sciences; there is no final word. Like science, it is evolving and continues to evolve. The more we probe nature, the more we learn from it. Similarly, the more we probe the human personality, the more we learn out of it. We say Vedanta is the science of the Spirit. It is the science of the Soul or the science of the human being. We can label it as the science of God.

We gain wisdom from many activities: hearing, reading, observing, thinking, and imagining. Rishis tried to find the truth about their own personalities by diving deep in meditation through a process of questioning, contemplating, and realizing. It was not an intellectual process but a metaphysical one. It began with an intellectual apprehension which then gained depth in the understanding of the human personality. From the question 'What is this human being?' they discovered great relationships which are in tune with the various religious thoughts of the world.

'You cannot catch me! I am immortal!'

One rishi said, 'I am Brahman.' What is Brahman? Brahman is not a god. It comes from the Sanskrit root *brih*, which means 'to grow' or 'to expand', leading to an expansive, all-pervasive Spirit. The rishi discovered something in himself that was not confined to his person. So he said, 'I am that all-pervasive substance.' He explained it in the following manner: 'There are five coverings or five sheaths on me: the physical covering, *annamaya-kosha*, which is made out of the food I eat; the vital force, *pranamaya-kosha*, which makes the nerves function and the whole being move; the mind function, *manomaya-kosha*, the cognitive faculty that gains ideas from outside; the rational intellect, *vijnanamaya-kosha*, which arranges, correlates, and discovers things; and finally the blissful mood, *anandamaya-kosha*, which is attained when I am

free from all thoughts of the body-mind complex.' What happens when we go into deep sleep? We forget everything, we have a good rest, we are relaxed, and we feel very happy. The blissful mood is like that. The seer discovered something more in that blissful mood that was depicting true human nature and was not confined to the body-mind complex. He identified that as pure awareness, *cit*. He declared: '*Cit*, consciousness, covered with *ananda*, bliss, is the real me. While the body-mind complex is constantly changing, the Truth in me remains the same at all times and under all circumstances.'

We go through many stages in life and have many different experiences. We are changing constantly. Our minds are changing, our bodies are changing; but we always say that we are the same person. The person has not changed from childhood to the present, although the body and mind have changed. My body has become old, but I am not old. What is it that tells you there is something that does not change? Vedanta says it is you, the Spirit. The Spirit is common to all the stages and does not change. You discover, 'I am that Spirit.' The Spirit is not confined to the person alone. It is all-pervasive.

When the teacher said, 'I am that Brahman, I am all-pervasive', a student asked, 'Sir, how do you feel that you are all-pervasive?' The rishi explained: 'Suppose you are going down a river in a boat and the boat enters the ocean. You see an unbounded expanse of water and you see all other rivers entering the ocean. In a similar manner, I am not confined to this body. This same ocean is behind all of us. The same cosmic Ground is the basis of all. We are all set in that.' The word Brahman was coined out of this realization; hence the statement: 'I am that Brahman.' Notice that exactly the same idea is stated in Judaism: 'Man is created in the image of God.' God's spirit is in all human beings. God is there behind the entire Creation. What Judaism calls God, the Holy One, whose spirit is in all of us, is called Brahman by the Hindus. Jesus Christ said: 'I am the Life, I am the Truth.' What is that Truth? That I am the Life. As Life, I exist in all beings. 'I and my Father are one.' Vedanta expresses this very idea

in the statement, 'I am that Brahman.' That pure divine cosmic Consciousness is in all of us. We are all children of God. Somebody asked the question, 'How do you define God?' The answer was given: *sat-cit-ananda*. God is *sat*, Truth; God is *cit*, Consciousness; and God is *ananda*, Love and Bliss. It is in all of us. What is the true nature of *sat-cit-ananda*? One answer was given: '*Shantam shivam sundaram*; it is peaceful, auspicious, and beautiful.' All beauty is from the Self. Beauty is not in the body; beauty is in the core of our being. Suppose the most beautiful person dies. We do not preserve the body. Neither do we adore it nor do we worship it. We remove it immediately and cover it up. Where did the beauty come from? Beauty came from the Self, the Soul, the Atman. When you perceive the beauty of the Soul, you see everything as beautiful. Let us take the example of a mother. The mother sees her own baby and thinks it to be the most beautiful child. Where does the beauty come from? It comes from herself, she sees her Self in her child.

The rishis discussed this Truth again and again. That was the search in Vedanta for a thousand years: 'How does the Truth behind this human being exist? How does it function?' Further questions were raised in the course of time. Another great saint arose and said: 'This Self in you is immortal, is eternal. Death cannot destroy the Self. It is indestructible. The Truth is so set that nothing can destroy it.' Then the question came: 'How do you explain that it is immortal?' The rishi followed it with the statement: '*Akashavat brahma*; the Self is like space.' The Godhead is like space. Can you destroy space? Anything can be placed in space and anything can be destroyed in space, but space itself cannot be destroyed. You can burn something in space; there will be a flame. After a while the flame will subside and you will find that space is untouched by it. There will be no scar left. You cannot destroy space. Just as space is all-pervasive and indestructible, so is Brahman.

When Socrates was ready to die, some of his disciples asked, 'Master, where shall we bury you?' Socrates said, 'If you catch me, then only can you bury me. You cannot catch me. I am immortal. You bury this body, not me.' Socrates had realized that he was the immortal Self. He identified himself with that immortal Self and not with the mortal body. Vedanta tells you that you are immortal, *amrita*. Nothing can destroy you. Just as we pass through childhood, youth, and old age, so we pass on to another life.

There are many accounts of life after death, or life after life, and many articles by Kübler-Ross and others postulate that the experience of death is not painful. It is a process, just like growing from childhood to youth and from youth to old age. So is transmigration from this body to another body. Death is only emotional for the survivors. We feel the misery of death because we lose our dear ones. Something becomes missing to us but not to the person who passes through the experience of death.

That Spirit residing in you is eternal. None can destroy it. The totality of the spiritual substance is called God. The rishis discovered the divine Ground in their own hearts. When Jesus Christ said, 'The kingdom of God is within you', and Buddha declared, 'The light of Truth is within you', they meant that God is not *out there*, but that he is inside all of us. Vedanta boldly proclaims that the divine Ground exists in all beings. Whether we are Hindu or Muslim, Jewish or Christian, black or white, yellow or brown, the same Atman, the same kingdom of God, the same spark of divinity exists in all of us. The human being is immortal. We are divine. This declaration of the divinity of the human person is the bold assertion of Vedanta.

In Christianity many people say that humans are born sinners and that we partake of the 'original sin'. It is absolutely not the case. Jesus Christ himself said, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' He did not call them sinners. They did not know what they were doing. Out of ignorance we may do some wrong. When knowledge comes, and you are illumined and enlightened through the words of the Lord, then you understand. You then abstain from such activities. In the Old Testament you find the Ten Commandments: You shall; You shall not. By following these we purify ourselves. So also in Hinduism there are moral and ethical laws.

Vedanta says that by following them you avoid all sin and evil. You realize your true nature from within.

The enunciated purpose of Vedanta is to know the Truth. All sages and saints that Hinduism has produced time and again have tried to verify this Truth. When you try to see the world from the point of view of all religions, and examine them, you discover the same idea: Man is divine, every human being is divine. We are in a world of multiplicity, a world which is a combination of both good and evil. Vedanta says: Avoid the evil and follow the good.

When one searches for the Truth it is necessary that one questions everything. Whether you read from a book, or a person of authority tells you, you must analyse: 'Is it true?' This has always to be kept in mind. We get knowledge only by examination. Otherwise, we end up with dogma. It is easy to hide behind a dogma by accepting it. Such is the case with a book or a personality. We have to compare. We make comparisons while studying science; when the Russians discover something, the Americans immediately try to find out to what extent it is true. They do not ignore it. We must do the same while studying religion. Religion is the science of the Spirit. It is the science of the Soul, science of Man, science of God. We must put this question: 'Is it true?'

Vedanta searches for Truth. No individual stands as an absolute authority. Humans have been given wisdom and are endowed with the divine spark. The Vedas declare: '*Tat shrishtva tad eva anupravishat*; having creating this world, God entered into it.' The cosmic Soul entered into it. This cosmic Soul is in all of us. In Vedanta the main point is not a theory. 'It is the truth that counts,' you have to constantly remind yourself. Read all the scriptures, examine them. When you come across an idea, ask: 'What is it that I learn from this?' Wisdom demands that you ask this question. Knowledge is power; it brings wisdom and helps us to move in the world carefully. The most important result is that when you know what you are in reality, you will know how to relate yourself to others. Our problem here is not God. I am a problem unto myself because I do not know how to relate to myself!

I always identify myself with a nation, a country, a religion, or a profession. Then what happens to me? I narrow myself down. But I do not put this question: 'Is it true? Is this all that I am or is there anything else?' A great scientist said: 'Ignorance of self is natural from the point of view of the animals, but in man it is a vice.' Ignorance of self leads to unrealistic behaviour. If I do not know what I really am, then I do not know how to behave. Assume that a mentally sick person, who does not know his or her identity, is let loose in society. Imagine what will happen! There will be publicity on all radio and television stations: 'Such-and-such a person has escaped from the mental hospital. Catch him!' Why? After all it is only one individual. Why not let him go? No! One mental case on the street can do a lot of damage because they do not know what they are doing. If you excuse me, I would say that we are all mental cases in some way. Whenever I narrow myself down and separate myself from you all, I am mentally sick. Vedanta tells you that when you separate yourself from the rest of humankind, something has gone wrong with you. Find out the common Ground. Find out the Atman in you; find out the Atman in others.

Brothers and Sisters of a Global Family

Finding the Truth is the most important goal. When you find out the Truth in yourself, then you can discover what others are. Therefore, even in our day-to-day life and behaviour we all need the knowledge of Truth in us. We all need Self-knowledge. We all need to seek the kingdom of God within ourselves. Once you discover it, you find to your joy and surprise that there is no difference between you and anybody else. In that sense, Jesus Christ said: 'Love your neighbour as yourself. Love your enemy. Bless them that curse you.' The same message is there in the Old Testament.

When you find out the Truth in yourself properly or when you become aware of it intuitively, you get a great joy out of life. Everybody becomes your brother and sister. Not only human beings but every living soul contains the same Self. For our own ex-

istence here, for our own peace and joy, for our own comfort and harmony, we have to know the Truth. Unfortunately, we have been brought up in society as though under a hypnotic spell. I tell you honestly that we are all hypnotized. It is a shocking tragedy for many of us how our education, our religion, our society, and our politics hypnotize us and we identify with it. We think we are such limited individuals, accept it, and suffer because of it.

Take a set of twins. Keep one child in America and take the other to Africa; bring them up separately. One child grows up in the American atmosphere: American culture, education, civilization, and this wonderful identity with the flag. The other child grows up in Africa. Imagine that they meet each other after twenty years. What would happen? If the mother were alive to see them, she would say that both were her children. For all practical purposes they are not similar or recognizable as brothers. So also, we are all children of God. Brahman is behind us. We are that Atman. Identify with Brahman, the Ground, and see the whole world as a unit. Vedanta stresses on that point: the Truth that is within you is the Truth in all beings. Seek that Truth. Identify with it. Then stand up and say, 'I am that Self which is equally existing in all.' You need to get the global vision: the world view, the cosmic view, the universal view. How can you get it? By finding the Truth that is within you and finding the same Truth in all. Vedanta proclaims that the same Atman is in all of us. A blissful awareness pervades all of us.

They do not destroy any religion in India, nor do they condemn any creed or sect. Let an idea please itself. Let the sects multiply. There are four thousand spiritual groups in India and all live in peace. What right do I have to say that I am right and others are wrong? There are thousands of books. No single book is the authority. There is no pope, no head of a religious movement who would say, 'This is the Word.' Elsewhere in the world the scene is different. Some would say, 'You are all wrong and we are right.' Some others would say, 'Kill those who do not believe!' Many follow these absurdities.

If I am right, then by the same logic the other person is also right. To understand this, you have to know the truth about both persons. That is why the stress is on Truth and not on its appearance. The emphasis is on Reality. Apparently we are all different. No two persons are alike, no two bodies are alike, and no two minds are alike. But fortunately behind the body-mind complex we have got the life spirit, the Soul, the Atman, the kingdom of God, the spark of divinity. We have to pay attention to that and look for it. Let us not worry about the name and the form, the body and the mind. Let us identify with the Self and live in peace. That is the principle of Vedanta. That is why in Vedantic spiritual practice we use the expression '*Shantih, shantih, shantih*; let there be peace!' How will peace come? I have to bring it. I have to make it by identifying myself with one and all. I have to see the same Self in all. That is the Truth. ॐ

References

1. See Randy Borum, *Psychology of Terrorism* (Tampa: University of South Florida, 2004).
2. See H H A Cooper, 'Psychopath as Terrorist', *Legal Medical Quarterly*, 2 (1978), 253–62.
3. See C Russell and B Miller, 'Profile of a Terrorist', *Terrorism: An International Journal*, 1/1 (1977), 17–34.
4. See Bruno S Frey and Simon Luechinger, 'How to Fight Terrorism: Alternatives to Deterrence', *Defence and Peace Economics*, 14/4 (2003), 237–49.
5. See Russell Hardin, 'The Crippled Epistemology of Extremism' in *Political Extremism and Rationality*, ed. Albert Breton and Gianluigi Galeotti (New York: Cambridge, 2002), 3–22.
6. See B Raman, *Terrorism – India's Unending War* <http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/apr/03spec.htm> accessed 25 July 2009.
7. See Aaron Tornell, 'Reform From Within', *NBER Working Paper 6497* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1998).
8. See B Raman, *India's Counter-terrorism Strategy* <http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/apr/05spec.htm> accessed 25 July 2009.
9. See Edward L Glaeser, 'The Political Economy of Hatred', *NBER Working Paper 9171* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2002).

Place of the Adi Granth in the Punjabi Literary Tradition

A P N Pankaj

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

G URU TEGH BAHADUR, the ninth guru, comes across as a poet of great merit and his *saloka*s, fifty-six in number, are touching in their poignancy and simplicity of expression. Kept in chains by Aurangzeb before being executed, he says:

Balu chuṭakio bandhan pare kachū na hot upāi;
Kahu Nānak ab oṭ hari gaj jiu hohu sahai.
Saṅg sakhā sabhi taji gae koū na nibahio sāthi;
Kahu Nānak ih bipati mai ṭek ek raghunāth.[24]

Strength has deserted me, in chains I feel helpless; Nanak says, my only shelter now is Hari. May He rescue me as he rescued the elephant. (The obvious allusion is to the mighty elephant Gajendra, who was tormented by a crocodile; and to Narayana who, at the former's earnest supplications, rescued him.) Friends have left my company, none abided with me. In this adversity, says Nanak, my only refuge is the Lord of Raghus.

The Folk Tradition of the Adi Granth

The Adi Granth has a strong folk flavour. It is not within the scope of this article to discuss the form, style, and character of the folk poetry and songs found in the Adi Granth. We may, however, mention that the oral literary genre is, in essence, both a progenitor and an inheritor of folk tradition. Punjab has, since the earliest times, been a fertile soil for this tradition, which the Adi Granth faithfully reflects. Mohinder Kaur Gill writes: '[The] literature of *Gurbāṇī* has, for the first time, lent authenticity to the age-old folk culture by giving it a written form. Written details of traditional folk impressions gained currency for the first time through *Gurbāṇī* literature. Myriad forms of folk literature, myths, legends,

anecdotes, rituals, beliefs and lyrical forms were penned in Gurmukhi script for the first time.'[25]

We have mentioned the compositions recited at the time of marriage and death. For other occasions also, like birth and pre-marital rites, the Guru Granth Sahib provides ample material based on folk culture in the form of *sohilā*s, *ghoṛī*s, *añjulī*s, *mundāvanī*s, and the like. There are compositions enumerating dates, months, and seasons, and songs sung during difficult journeys to relieve the mind of fatigue, stress, and torpor. Pangs of separation are expressed through the folk form of *birahaṛā*s, eager expectation of seasonal festivals is sung in classical folk forms, and the characteristics of a callous physical frame distinguished from a competent body through the *kuchajjī* and *suchajjī* folk expressions. All these folk forms are, of course, geared to convey the spiritual states—joy, rapture, separation, anxiety, contrition, and so on—of the author. The plights of the *dohāgini*, the trollop, and the fortunes of the *suhāgini*, the favourite wife, are underscored symbolically. In the rainy month of Savan, the heart of the bride, in love with the lotus feet of her Lord, blossoms. Her body and mind are drenched in the colour of Truth. In the holy Name she finds refuge:

Sāvaṇi sarasī kāmaṇī caran kamal siu piāru;
Manu tanu ratā sac raṅgi iko nāmu adhāru.[26]

Language of the Adi Granth

On this issue we cannot do better than quote Anthony De Mello: 'The words of the scholar are to be understood. The words of the Master are not to be understood. They are to be listened to as one listens

to the wind in the trees and the sound of the river and the song of the bird. They will awaken something within the heart that is beyond knowledge.'[27]

This is so very true of the *gurbānī*, words of the guru. And yet a scholar, with his predilections, must insist on intellectually understanding and analysing the words of the master, and hence the language—syntax, grammar, and meaning. A detailed exposition of the language of the Adi Granth would call for independent treatment; for our purposes a brief discussion must suffice.

The issue of the origin and development of the Punjabi language is inextricably linked with the larger question of the growth and development of Sanskrit and the cognate dialects of Prakrit. It is now generally accepted that the Vedic language—the forerunner of classical Sanskrit—had itself developed through several centuries of common use. Even the Vedic hymns were brought forth over a large period of time, as is suggested by internal linguistic evidence. Though classical Sanskrit must surely have been a language used by common people in its early stages, it increasingly became the language of the educated elite even while it retained some touch with the masses. With the introduction of strict rules of grammar—by grammarians topped by Panini (c. 4th cent. BCE)—and writing, literary expression became increasingly formalized. T Burrow observes:

> Although the gap between Sanskrit and the ordinary spoken language grew progressively, this did not have an adverse effect on the use of Sanskrit but rather its importance grew with time. For instance the language of administration in Mauryan times … was Prākrit; but gradually Prākrit was replaced by Sanskrit until finally Sanskrit was almost exclusively used for this purpose. A similar development took place among the Buddhists. … The scriptures of the Theravāda school are preserved in … Pāli, but later, shortly after the Christian era, the northern Buddhists turned to Sanskrit. … The Jainas, though at a much later date, followed the example of Buddhists and also began to compose in Sanskrit instead of Prākrit. On the whole it can be said that during the last 600 years of pre-Muslim India Sanskrit was more extensively and exclusively used than at any time since the close of the Vedic period.[28]

'The emergence of the modern Indo-Aryan languages dates from the period after A.D. 1000' (165). Krishna Kripalani agrees substantially: 'As regards the languages of north India derived from the spoken dialects of Middle Indo-Āryan (of which the cultivated form was Sanskrit), their separate identity was not perhaps established till after the eleventh century, for their earliest extant literary classics are not older than the twelfth and thirteenth centuries' (305). Punjabi language has its roots in the aforementioned languages and dialects.

Bhai Vir Singh, a highly respected Punjabi literary figure, has made some significant observations about the origin and development of the Punjabi language.[29] Some of these are summarized below.

- The language which is identified as Punjabi was called Hindi, Hindu, or Hindavi by the Muslim poets of old like Abdul Karim, Hafiz Muazzaz Din, Maulavi Muhammad Muslim, and Imamuddin.
- The term 'Punjabi' for this language was first used by Hafiz Barkhurdar in 1670 CE.
- Punjab, in the Vedic Age, was known as *saptasindhu*, which was pronounced as *hapta-haindu* by the Iranians. In the process of change, this word became *hind*—whilst still referring to Punjab. However, when the Muslims crossed Punjab and occupied the other parts of India, *hind* came to denote the entire country occupied by them.[30]
- During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, when Punjab carved out a niche for itself, the words 'Hind' and 'Punjab' came to have separate meanings.
- The language of Punjab ceased being called Hindi during the British rule, being then recognized as a language altogether distinct from Hindi.
- In contrast to the languages of eastern India, Punjabi has preserved the original pronunciation of Sanskrit letters and is phonetically closer to it.
- The language which we now call Punjabi is not

a rustic language. Since the Vedic Age till today, a continuous flow of spiritual, religious, literary, scientific, and philosophic works, and the values enshrined in them, have been embedded in the collective psyche of even the unlettered people of Punjab.

• Punjabi is the language of Punjab, and is not the possession of any single religious community. Muslim, Hindu, Christian, and Sikh luminaries have all contributed to enrich it. The fact that the writings of Muslim poets reflect Islamic traditions and ethos and abound in Arabic and Persian words does not make theirs a different language. It remains Punjabi.

The Guru Granth Sahib is not just a witness to the nearly five hundred years of evolution of the Punjabi language; it is also its pioneering architect. Mohinder Kaur Gill says, 'Ādi Śrī Gurū Granth Sāhib is not just our revered book, it is the original authentic work of Punjabi literature. With Gurū Granth Sāhib, Punjabi literature has attained an identifiable face. ... [It is] not just a philosophic treatise but also the first book of Punjabi literature in which the principles of literary writings are followed.'[31]

This compilation of works of the gurus and saints—from Shaikh Farid, the great Muslim Sufi saint, to the tenth guru—has made the Guru Granth Sahib a veritable confluence of not only the streams of thoughts and sentiments of the exponents of different religions and sects but also of a variety of words from Sanskrit (largely in the *tadbhava* or modified form), Sadhukkari, the Prakrits, Braj, Avadhi, Khari-boli, Multani (Lahindi), Sindhi, Persian, and Arabic.[32] Gopal Singh has noted over two hundred and fifty idioms and proverbs in the Punjabi language that can be traced back to the Guru Granth Sahib.

With all this variety, it is amazing that readers—even those with great sensitivity—experience in it not a cacophony but an uplifting harmony, at times even the kind of stillness that one experiences in prayerful silence. Thus the language of the Guru Granth Sahib, thanks to the intuitive wisdom and divine insight of Guru Arjan, has made this work an invaluable legacy—a philosophic, spiritual, and

literary treasure. Turning to its pages one cannot help but be reminded of the all-inclusive character of Indian culture. One cannot, of course, overlook the importance of the single script—Gurmukhi—in which the entire *bānī* is written. It has served the essential purpose of contributing cohesiveness to the *bānī*, originally written or expressed orally in different scripts and languages on different occasions and in different time periods.

The Philosophical Outlook of the Guru Granth Sahib

Poetic expressions of philosophy and theology are not uncommon in the Indian tradition. Since the times of the Vedic Samhitas and the Upanishads there has been a constant flow of poetry conveying intricate philosophy. The Bhagavadgita, the *Yogavasishtha*, countless Puranic passages, and many works of Jain and Buddhist philosophers have been composed in scintillating verses and lyrical metres, conveying deep and complex philosophical thought—as also exquisite sentiments, similes, and metaphors—besides rules of prosody and poetics. Acharya Shankara, one of the greatest intellectuals that India has produced, composed several important works on Advaita Vedanta—*Aparokshanubhuti*, *Vivekachudamani*, and the like—in beautiful verse. Indian acharyas of poetics have used the epithet *brahmānanda-sahodara*, the brother of the bliss of Brahman, for *kāvya*, poetry. The Adi Granth is an integral part of this tradition. In it poetry and philosophy—heart and head—are locked in so close an embrace that it becomes difficult to decide which of the two is to be given a higher place.

Although the Adi Granth is a compilation of the *bānī* of many gurus and *bhagat*s and, therefore, unavoidably contains varying strands of thought, it is essentially the philosophical thought of Guru Nanak—who was himself considerably influenced by Kabir[33]—that permeates the work. This philosophy, like that of the early Upanishads, is more intuitive and experiential than intellectual, though tempered by the social, and also political, circumstances of medieval India. The luminaries of the Guru Granth

Sahib were as much a part of the bhakti movement—which, having originated in the South, had flooded North India—as they were influenced by it.

Broadly speaking, according to the Adi Granth, God is one. He is Truth Eternal, *Ek Oṅkār*, beyond human comprehension and knowledge, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. He is the creator, protector, and destroyer of the world. He is also gracious and compassionate and loves his devotees. Though given all these attributes and epithets, he is without attributes and qualifications. He is *niraṅkār* or *nirākār*. His name is *Oṅkār*, but he is also addressed variously as Ram, Raja Ram, Raghunath, Narayan, Hari, Sharngapani, Gobind (Govind), Gopalrai, Murari, Bithal (Vitthala), Bisumbhara (Vishvambhara), Allah, and Khuda. These names and epithets, some of which remind the reader of God with attributes and form, *saguṇa* and *sākāra*, have been a part of the collective Indian memory through the millennia. The ineffable, unknowable, undefinable God is realized when his grace descends upon the devotee through the help of the guru. God himself is the *ādi gurū*, the Primordial Master.

God cannot be found in temples or mosques, by worshipping images or by performing *sijdāh* or namaz, or by ritually reciting the Vedas or the Quran. He resides within. In their search for salvation people blindly follow preceptors who, themselves caught in the abyss of ignorance, drag their followers down too. Thus they keep the tortuous cycle of birth and death revolving endlessly. Salvation is possible through *simaran*, remembrance, and *jap*, repetition of the holy Name, the guru's *sabad*, whereby God reveals himself. Of course, there also has to be a deep longing—*vyākulatā*, as Sri Ramakrishna used to say—for Him: '*Ākhā jīvā visarai mari jāu*; I live if I utter His Name, I die if I forget.'

Maya may not imply the unreality of the world. The worldly values—power, pelf, palaces, pearls, and spouse—are all *kūḍu* or *mithyā*, illusory. Unless one turns one's back to them and becomes *gurmukh*, facing the guru or God, one cannot be delivered from the circle of transmigration. The Sikh tradition places great emphasis on *hukam*, divine order and will. *Hukam* is both a command and the harmony, divinely willed, to prevail in nature. One has to experience oneself as being part of this harmony and follow the divine command. This harmony and happiness can be experienced by the repetition of the divine Name—*nām simaran*—and through the compassionate glance, *nadar* or *nazar*, of the Divine.

The poetry and philosophy of the Adi Granth are harmoniously intertwined. Together they elevate intellectually, delight emotionally, and, through the guru's grace, redeem, the Sikh. Generation after generation of poets, thinkers, spiritual seekers, and saints have found in it the vocabulary, meaning, melody, rhythm, and devotional inspiration they were seeking. The Sanskrit word *kavi*, which signifies 'poet', 'sage', 'thinker', and 'omniscient Lord', all at once, can very aptly be applied to the composers of the Adi Granth's hymns.

I would like to conclude this essay with one of the many passages of the Adi Granth that I consider my favourites. Even as I seek the reader's pardon for this subjectivity, I wish to point out that this selection gives a compelling glimpse into the excellences of Guru Nanak's philosophic idiom and poetic imagery. Though the joy of reading it in the original can hardly be reproduced, I have to confine myself to a translation for reasons of space:

> In the end, masters and disciples, prophets, kings and emperors will all go under the grave. God alone shall remain.
> You alone are! You alone are!
> Neither gods, nor demons, nor men, neither accomplished mystics nor seekers, shall endure. God alone shall endure.
> You alone are! You alone are!
> Dispensers of justice do not abide for ever, the seven netherworlds too would not remain. He, and none else, shall endure.
> You alone are! You alone are!
> Not sun, not moon, not the circle of stars, neither the seven seas nor the continents, neither food nor air shall endure for ever.
> You alone are! You alone are!

The Haridasa Literary Tradition of Karnataka

Dr H N Muralidhara

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

Foremost among the disciples of Gopala-dasa was Jagannatha-dasa (1727–1809). Before he became a Haridasa, he was known as Srinivasacharya. He was a profound Sanskrit scholar and used to look upon the 'Kannada dasas' with contempt. Once Vijaya-dasa came to his place and invited him to the worship of Vijaya Vitthala, his chosen deity. For obvious reasons Srinivasacharya rejected the invitation. Soon after he was afflicted with intense stomach pain, which later turned out to be due to tuberculosis. Finding no cure, he became convinced that this was the consequence of his arrogant behaviour towards the Haridasas. He went to Vijaya-dasa and tendered his sincere apologies. Vijaya-dasa blessed him and sent him to Gopala-dasa. By the blessings of Gopala-dasa not only was his disease cured, he was also initiated into the Haridasa tradition and given the name Jagannatha-dasa. He composed hundreds of songs under the *ankita* 'Jagannatha Vitthala'. In one of his famous songs he describes the cosmic worship of the Lord thus: 'The worship of the Lord is so easy for those who understand. Unfortunate is he who does not understand. The universe is the *mandapa*, earth the pedestal, rain his ablution (*abhisheka*); the quarters are his clothing, the malaya-breeze the fragrant incense, all the grain grown on earth his offering (*naivedya*), the lightning that shines is the Arati of camphor.'[11]

Hari-kathamrita-sara, a treatise on the theory and practice of devotion, is an important poetic work of Jagannatha-dasa. It is written in the Shatpadi metre, each stanza containing six lines. In this work one can find a rare harmony of scholastic acumen with deep devotional feelings. Here is an excerpt:

Even with the prayer of Lakshmi—the presiding deity of the Vedas and Vedangas—He cannot be understood, as He is the ocean of all the eternal imperishable virtues. (Even then) He is subdued by seers who meditate and serve His feet every day. Oh, how kind He must be! He cannot be obtained through mind or speech. But He wanders along with those who meditate upon him. He, having borne the universe within Himself and being the indweller of the jivas, is born with them. He is possessed of immense prowess. And He, having heard the singing of His devotees, appears in their mind. So eager is He that He sits hearing His praise when the devotee sings [the same with devotion]; He hears it standing, if the devotee sings the same sitting. He begins to dance [hearing it], if the devotee sings standing; and if the devotee sings and dances [in ecstasy], He gives Himself up. He is so easy [of approach], and cannot remain separated even for a moment. This being so, the creatures suffer in this world not knowing how to please Him.[12]

The lineages established by Vijaya-dasa, Gopala-dasa, and Jagannatha-dasa have made significant contributions in carrying forward the tradition to later periods. The list is long; the prominent names include Mohana-dasa, Timmanna-dasa, Rama-dasa, Yogendrappa ('Pranesha Vitthala'), Karajagi Dasappa ('Srida Vitthala'), and Ananda-dasa. The Haridasa tradition is still intact in Karnataka, though with lesser intensity. Even the 20th century saw a long list of Haridasa poets keeping the tradition alive.

It needs to be added that this tradition was not restricted to men. We come across many Haridasis such as Helavanakatte Giriyamma, Harapanahalli Bhimavva, and others who have made significant

contributions not only from the literary point of view but from that of spiritual attainment as well.

The Central Message

In the socio-religious history of Karnataka the Haridasas' was a distinct note. They saved religion from lifeless rituals and the control of so-called scholastic circles, and brought it closer to the common people. From this point of view their concept of 'devotion' had a revolutionary dimension. They not only recreated various incidents from such Puranas as the Bhagavata, they redefined them as well. They established the primacy of repetition of the Lord's name in all spiritual practices. This may even be construed, in a way, as an alternative to the Vedic ritualistic tradition. On the one hand, this divine name of the Lord brought each and every person into the spiritual fold, and on the other it unified the community, erasing distinctions of caste, class, and creed. Purandara-dasa observes: 'O mind, do not forget to repeat the name of Lord Hari. Why need one perform sacrifices and rituals? Why become a mendicant or a monk? Loudly chant the name of the Lord who rests on Adishesha, praised by the sage Narada.'

Ritualistic performances are external in nature, whereas the repetition of the holy name is internal. According to the Haridasas, it is this shift from the external to the internal that makes spiritual practice more meaningful. In this type of sadhana there is no place for 'middlemen'. Ritualistic practices, though they admit a few into the fold of religion, leave out the majority. On the contrary, the *nama-sadhana* of the Haridasas includes everyone and excludes none. It prescribes no preconditions for sadhana:

> In this age of Kali if one chants the name of Hari, generations after generations will be liberated. Remember Him who is easy to obtain through simple devotion. Do not say 'I do not know how to take a holy bath; and I cannot observe the vow of silence.' Do not say 'I know not the ways of worship and the means of pleasing the Lord, since I am wretched.' Do not say 'I know not the ways of repetition of the holy name and performance of penances and am

not initiated by a holy man'. Find a means by which to remember Him whose glory has no end.

Rituals demand a specific time and place for their performance. One cannot observe them according to one's own convenience. But this is not the case with remembrance of the holy name. Not only that, such remembrance helps bridge the gap between the so-called secular and the spiritual. The way of remembrance accepts day-to-day activities in their entirety and urges one to spiritualize every single moment. This view is aptly illustrated in a famous composition of Purandara-dasa that gives a long list of daily activities and ties them to *nama-sadhana*:

> Why not chant 'Krishna' when by doing so
>   all difficulties will vanish?
> When you have attained the human birth
>   and are endowed with a tongue,
>   why not chant 'Krishna'?
> While waking up from sleep
>   why not chant 'Krishna'?
> Moving hither and thither in the household
>   why not chant 'Krishna'?
> Losing control of your tongue while talking,
>   why not chant 'Krishna'?
> While treading a path carrying burden,
>   why not chant 'Krishna'?
> While you smear your body with perfume
>   and enjoy the taste of betel leaves,
>   why not chant 'Krishna'?
> When in the joyous company of the sweetheart,
>   why not chant 'Krishna'?
> While conversing in a lighter vein,
>   why not chant 'Krishna'?
> Considering this too a duty amidst many others,
>   why not chant 'Krishna'?
> When you are caressing your child
>   why not chant 'Krishna'?
> Seated on a luxurious bed
>   why not chant 'Krishna'?

The Haridasas stress this internal attitude more than anything else. Even if some people engage themselves in all types of ritualistic practices, but lack sincerity of purpose, the Haridasas dismiss them as indulging in mere show:

This is nothing but showy renunciation: These people have not an iota of devotion towards our Lord. They get up at dawn and shiver terribly to show to others that they have had their bath and make them wonder-struck, with all the ego, jealousy, and anger full to the brim within. They gather all the vessels of shining brass and copper as if it were a brassware shop and light many lamps before them so that they glitter. This is the kind of deceitful worship they offer. With the rosary beads in their hand and mantra in their mouth, they put on a veil of cloth and contemplate not God but woman (ibid.).

It is also to be noted here that according to the Haridasas, 'dasatva, the state of being a dasa' is not merely a nomenclature or a designation. Nor is dasatva a state of inaction or inertia. It is a very positive process by which an aspirant consciously loses the ego and surrenders completely to the Lord. Even in this process the devotee does not proclaim, 'I will become a dasa of the Lord.' It is their contention that if the Lord 'accepts' their dasatva, they may become one. Hence, this elimination of ego is not only an end, but is also a means. To quote a famous composition of Purandara-dasa: 'Make me your slave, Venkataramana, you, the Lord with a thousand names. Eliminate my bad qualities; fix your shield of compassion to my soul; grant me the service of your feet; bless me by placing your lotus-like hand on my head.'

One interesting feature of this sadhana is that the devotees not only take some responsibility upon themselves, but they fix an equal amount of accountability on the Lord himself! Both the devotee and the Lord enter into an 'agreement' to this effect. Says Purandara-dasa:

O Krishna, let there be an oath upon you and an oath upon me; and let us both have the oath of your devotees. If I do not utter your name, let the oath be on me; and if you do not protect me, let it be on you. If I adore others leaving you, let the oath be on me; if you forsake my hands, let it be on you. If I deceive you by my mind, body, and wealth, let the oath be on me; and if you do not fix

my mind in you, let it be on you. If I associate with the wicked, let it be on me; if you do not make me free from this worldly affection, let it be on you. If I do not make friendship with the virtuous, let it be on me; and if you do not dissociate me from the wicked, let it be on you. If I do not resort to you, let it be on me; if you do not protect me, O Purandara Vitthala, let it be on you.[13]

This dasatva of the Haridasas has other dimensions as well. At the spiritual level the dasa actually becomes a master of his own senses, while those who claim to be masters are actually slaves to desires. At the socio-political level the Haridasas may be considered free souls who declined to be ruled by any human superiors. They virtually challenged kingship with their spiritual courage: 'When Lord Krishna is there to bestow his supreme blessings, what need is there to serve any mortal?' was the stand taken by Guru Vyasa-raya when he was being greatly honoured by the kings of the Vijayanagara Empire for his spiritual attainments. A similar stand has been taken by the other Haridasas too. Completely surrendering oneself to the Lord and desiring nothing has been the main feature of their spiritual discipline. In fact, one cannot draw a line of distinction between what constitutes sadhana in this tradition and what does not. Existence itself, in all its totality, becomes the theatre of spiritual practice. The culmination of this idea may be found in one of the songs of Kanaka-dasa:

This body is Yours; so is the life within it; Yours too are the sorrows and joys of our daily life. Whether sweet word or Veda or study or law, the power in the ear that hears them is Yours; the vision in the eye that gazes unblinking on beauty of young form, yea, that vision is Yours. The pleasure that we feel in living together with the fragrance of musk and sweet scents, that is Yours; and when the tongue rejoices in the taste of its food, Yours is the pleasure with which it rejoices. This body of ours and the five senses, which are caught in the net of illusion, all, all is Yours. O source of all desire that the body bears, is man his own master? Nay, all his being is Yours (78).

For the Haridasas the practice of devotion is not something abstract or conceptual; it is that which transforms the aspirants and keeps them in divine communion every moment of their lives.

While describing the qualities of a devotee in one of his songs, Jagannatha-dasa prays to the Lord to keep him in such holy company always. Portions of the song run like this:

O Ranga, the ocean of mercy! Protect me, having bestowed upon me the union of the auspicious devotees that sing your fame. They [the devotees] do not know any other God except you. They shall never forget the favour done by you without any motive. They shall never do away with the service they do at your feet every day. They are not aware of any other thought except that of the highest Truth. They remain just like the deaf and the dumb. They never entertain in their mind any wicked contrivances. They never accept at any time anything which is not [first] offered to you. And they do not hanker after the pleasures of liberation (moksha) either. They [always] believe that victory and defeat, profit and loss, honour and dishonour, safety and danger, pleasure and misery, gold and wood, the lovable and the ugly, praise and insult, and the like are all subordinate to your will. They are unswerving devotees (*ekanta-bhakta*s) like the gods. They are the followers of rites and observances suitable to the country and time. They are free from the snare of desire, anger, love, passion, and other vices. And they are capable of [bestowing] blessings and curse. They consider that whatever is eaten and fed is all sacrifice to you. They enjoy the nectar of your name like the bee [that enjoys fragrance]. And they consider that their wives and children are all your slaves. They never forget at any cost their usual observances. They are worshipped by [all in] the world. They never cringe [for anything] with meekness. They never accept anything that comes from your enemies, and they give whatever is begged of them. They are ever joyous. They laugh, they weep, and they dance [in ecstasy]. [They] the Bhagavatas never desire for riches, nor [do they seek] poverty. They never remove their mind from you at any time. O Jagannatha Vitthala, how great and how blessed are your devotees!

Forms of Literary Expression

The Haridasa literature has two important aspects: the philosophical and the literary. The main compositions of the Haridasas are in the form of *kirtana*s, songs, *ugabhoga*s, non-metrical short pieces, and *suladi*s, compositions set to seven different talas, traditional metrical patterns. Kirtanas are also known as *pada*s or *devaranama*s. Normally they begin with a *pallavi*, refrain, followed by three to five stanzas that elaborate the idea or the emotion expressed in the refrain. The last stanza contains the *ankita* which identifies the composer. The majority of *ankita*s are prefixed to the name 'Vitthala': Purandara Vitthala, Vijaya Vitthala, Gopala Vitthala, and so on. This is because the Haridasas are traditionally devotees of Panduranga, or Vitthala, of Pandharpur in Maharashtra. As a form of literary expression, the kirtanas have two facets: one is the 'text' or linguistic content; the other is the 'performance' or traditional rendering. It is at the stage of performance that many fresh shades of expression unfold. The development of this form to its fullest artistic reach is the unique contribution of the Haridasas to the Kannada literary tradition. Spontaneity is one of the main features of these compositions. They take shape according to the need at the time of its expression. Though musical performance is the main form of expression, the compositions are not meant to demonstrate the features of musical raga. In this respect the Haridasas differ from the Vaggeyakaras or composers like Tyagaraja. The Haridasa compositions are more *bhava-pradhana* than *raga-pradhana*, that is, they give precedence to sentiment over melody; and this is attested to by the very linguistic and prosodic nature of the compositions. The features that the Haridasa compositions exhibit can be grouped into a few select patterns, the possibilities of which each composition tries to explore in its own distinct way. These compositions are not 'tuned' to music. Though the compositions have both raga and tala content, these are intrinsic to their structure, not extrinsic. Even their metrical patterns and tala forms differ from the classical tradition in being more akin to *desi*, local, structures.

'We should live thus'

The study of the Haridasa tradition amply demonstrates how a devotional movement can take people nearer to God. Even today we have thousands of *bhajana mandali*s, singing troupes, across Karnataka that sing Haridasa compositions in chorus, and the majority of these troupes are of women. Moreover, theirs is not mere singing but a ritualistic performance wherein a definite method is followed. And this method has become part and parcel of the daily routine of the common folk. Each and every daily activity is associated with some song or other of a Haridasa. For instance, there are countless songs which depict mother Yashoda waking up, bathing, adorning, feeding, and playing with the child Krishna. Mothers perform similar activities with their children singing these songs, thereby ele-

vating the mundane to the level of the divine.

Several passages, proverbial statements, idiomatic expressions, and punch lines of the Haridasa kirtanas have found their way into the Kannada diction, and can be heard in routine conversations of even the illiterate. Without particularly knowing the author, people recall a line or two from a song and say, '… we should live thus.' The Haridasa movement is democratic in the true sense of the term—by the people, of the people, for the people. What more can we expect from a literary tradition? It has made the land, the language, and the people blessed. ❧

References

11. See *History of Kannada Literature*, 83.
12. See *Mystic Teachings of the Haridasas*, 112.
13. See ibid. 56.

Notes and References

1. Mohandas K Gandhi*, Gandhi: An Autobiography* (*The Story of My Experiments with Truth*) (Boston: Beacon, 1957), 265.
2. It should also be pointed out that, at 100,000 verses, the Mahabharata is four times longer than the Bible.
3. Why do I use the term *theology* and not *philosophy*? To be sure, each of these thinkers was also a great philosopher. But in the context of writing commentarial literature on works of scripture, and taking the received tradition as the starting point for reflection, I use the term theology, to contrast such reflection with reflection that begins from a more abstract starting point. It is not a pejorative term, although I have encountered Indian scholars who have taken it as such, as implying something less scientific or rational than the term philosophy. But that is not my understanding. As a reflection on the Gita, this essay is itself a work of theology.
4. According to Swami Vivekananda, Vedanta is ultimately based not on any text, but on the *experiences* of the enlightened sages who wrote those texts. The Gita itself makes a similar claim for the priority of direct experience (Bhagavadgita, 2.46). The Upanishads are widely regarded in the various Vedanta traditions, though, as pre-eminent among the texts that communicate the insights of realized sages.

5. Gita, 2.2–3. All translations from the text of the Gita are my own.
6. Beyond the seeming contradiction between the Gita's teaching of non-violence in some sections and apparent endorsement of war in others, scholars have cited linguistic and stylistic differences between the Gita and the larger portion of the Mahabharata, of which it forms a part, to argue that the Gita, at least in its current form, is a later composition. See C Jinarajadasa, *The Bhagavad Gita* (Madras: Theosophical Publishing, 1915) and S Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad Gita* (HarperCollins, 1993).
7. An excellent collection of articles that explore this issue from a variety of perspectives is the volume edited by Steven J Rosen: *Holy War: Violence and the Bhagavad Gita* (Hampton: Deepak Heritage, 2002).
8. Gita, 16.2.
9. Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), 14–16.
10. Joshua, 6.21: 'They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.'
11. Gita, 18.41–4.
12. Swami Jyotirmayananda, *Mysticism of the Mahabharata* (Miami: Yoga Research Foundation, 1993).
13. Gita, 13.1.
14. Mohandas K Gandhi, *The Bhagavad Gita According to Gandhi* (Berkeley: North Atlantic, 2009), 36–7.
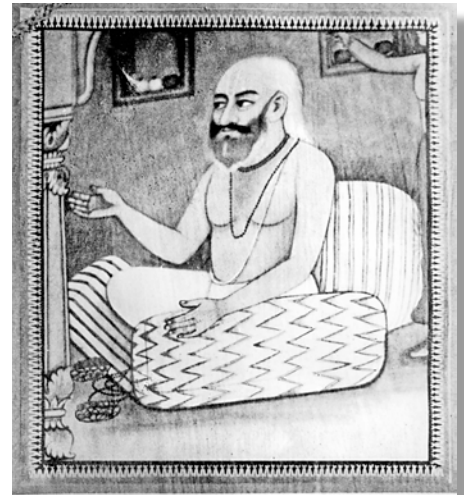
Sant Tulsidas

Swami Durgananda

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

When Swamiji was at Ramnad, he said in the course of a conversation that Shri Rama was the Paramatman and that Sita was the Jivatman, and each man's or woman's body was the Lanka (Ceylon). The Jivatman which was enclosed in the body, or captured in the island of Lanka, always desired to be in affinity with the Paramatman, or Shri Rama. But the Rakshasas would not allow it, and Rakshasas represented certain traits of character. For instance, Vibhishana represented Sattva Guna; Ravana, Rajas; and Kumbhakarna, Tamas. ... These Gunas keep back Sita, or Jivatman, which is in the body, or Lanka, from joining Paramatman, or Rama. Sita, thus imprisoned and trying to unite with her Lord, receives a visit from Hanuman, the Guru or divine teacher, who shows her the Lord's ring, which is Brahma-Jnana, the supreme wisdom that destroys all illusions; and thus Sita finds the way to be one with Shri Rama, or, in other words, the Jivatman finds itself one with the Paramatman.[10]

Tulsi's Works

ALL the works of Tulsidas are about Sri Ram, with two exceptions: *Krishna-gitavali* and *Parvati-mangal*. Tulsidas's magnum opus, the *Ramcharitmanas*, is the story of Sri Ram retold in mellifluous language—an outburst of bhakti based on his own spiritual experiences. Although the origin of the *Ramcharitmanas* lies in the *Valmiki Ramayana*, its immediate source is the *Adhyatma Ramayana*.

What are the differences between these two Ramayanas? The *Valmiki Ramayana* is ancient, has 24,000 verses, and depicts Rama as the epitome of 'human' perfection. The much shorter *Adhyatma Ramayana*, a part of the Brahmanda Purana, is of a later period. It depicts Rama as Brahman itself, and

Sant Tulsidas

is an excellent confluence of Advaita Vedanta philosophy and the *Valmiki Ramayana*. The character Ravana in the *Valmiki Ramayana* is a plain villain, symbolic of vice in an ordinary human being. By contrast, the Ravana of the *Adhyatma Ramayana* longs for liberation through confrontation with Rama, which is described as *vidvesha bhakti*.[11]

'Ramcharitmanas' means 'the lake of the deeds of Ram'. The entire story is a narration by Shiv to Parvati. 'Manas' here denotes a lake conceived in the mind of Shiv. Like the other Ramayanas, the *Ramcharitmanas* too contains seven *kanda*s. On literary merit, it can be compared with the works of the famous Sanskrit poet Kalidasa. According to Vishwanath, Tulsidas has packed into this single work all the drama and variety of emotions, moods, and judgements that Shakespeare spread out across thirty-seven plays.[12] In addition, he depicts how one 'ought to be'. It is written in Awadhi, or Baiswari—the dialect of the Awadh region—mainly in the *chaupai* and *doha* metres, and is sung to a sweet and captivating tune. It not only provides a philosophical outlook on life through its enthralling poetry, but is also a powerful tool for *lila chintan*, thinking of the exploits and glories of God, which is an efficacious method of sadhana.

Tulsidas's other long works include the following:

(i) *Dohavali*, written in Brajbhasha and containing 573 verses in the Doha and Soratha metres. A variety of subjects are dealt with in this work, including religion, bhakti, ethics, love, discrimination, the nature of saints, and the glory of Sri Ram and the name of God.

(ii) *Kavitta Ramayana*, or *Kavitavali*, containing the story of Sri Ram in 369 stanzas in the Kavitta, Savaiya, Chhapyaya, Jhulana, and some other metres. It is very popular owing to its style and disposition. It describes the majestic side of Sri Ram.

(iii) *Gitavali*, a collection of 330 songs set to different ragas—Kedara, Soratha, Lalita, Chanchari, and others—where the depth of mood is brought to the fore in preference to philosophy. It portrays the tender aspect of Sri Ram.

(iv) *Vinay-patrika*, with 279 hymns and prayers, is a book of petitions in the court of King Ram.

(v) *Krishnavali*, or *Krishna-gitavali*, has 61 songs on Sri Krishna.[13]

The following are his shorter works: *Vairagya-sandipini*, which deals with the nature of dispassion; *Ramlala-nahachu*, verses for *nahachu*, a ritual performed at the time of *yajnopavita*, sacred-thread ceremony, and marriage; *Ramajna-prashna*, verses for an auspicious beginning to a journey or a task; *Barvai Ramayan*, a small poetic composition in the Barvai metre; *Janki-mangal* and *Parvati-mangal*, which describe the marriages of Sita and Parvati; *Hanuman Bahuk*, an appendix to *Kavitavali* containing prayers to Hanuman; and *Hanuman-chalisa*, forty rhymes in praise of Hanuman.

Tulsi's Philosophy

Though Tulsidas was ardently devoted to Sri Ram, he was not a zealot. Far from it; in his works Sri Ram functions as a symbol on to which the human mind can hold for the double purpose of conceiving the ultimate Reality and expressing devotion to it. Thus, Tulsi's Ram is not a historical human character but 'Satchidananda the Sun, which has

not even an iota of the darkness of delusion'.[14]

This is the reason why other deities such as Krishna and Shiv appear in his works—rather interchangeably—in addition to Ram. Through his own purity and devotion, Tulsidas brought the impersonal, attributeless Brahman within the range of the imagination of common people and into their daily lives. He brought the Supreme, propounded by Sri Shankaracharya as the unknowable Brahman, within the reach of the masses. He made the Formless take birth and walk on earth and thus redirected the flow of people's consciousness to this lofty ideal.

How could the formless Brahman become a human being? This abstract and ever-perplexing metaphysical question is clarified in the first canto of the *Ramcharitmanas*, through a conversation between Parvati and Shiv:

> Parvati: Is this that Ram, the son of Ayodhya's king or is he an unborn, attributeless, and unperceivable being? If he is the son of a king, how can he be Brahman? (If he is Brahman) how did he get perturbed upon the loss of his wife? (1.108.4, 1.109.1).
> Shiv: There is no difference between the *saguna*, endowed with attributes, and the *nirguna*, attributeless. … That which is attributeless, formless, unmanifested, and unborn, is none other than the *saguna*, just as ice is nothing but water. Sri Ram is the all-pervasive Brahman, the supreme Bliss, the Almighty, the Ancient (1.116.1, 4).

While Sri Ram is the omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient Brahman, the jiva is 'a part of Ishvara—indestructible, conscious, unblemished, and blissful by its very nature. Being under the control of maya, the jiva is tied up, like a parrot or a monkey! And in this way, a knot has been formed between consciousness and matter, which is very difficult to untie, although unreal' (7.117.1–2).

Tulsidas enlightens the miserable, struggling, and floundering jiva thus:

> Union, disunion; experience—pleasant and unpleasant; friend, foe, and the neutral; all these are snares of delusion. Birth and death; provision and deprivation; action and time; are all the meshes of the world. Land and city; wealth, home, and

family; heaven and hell; as much be the sensible world, all that is seen, heard, thought—the root of all this is in delusion. In reality, they are not (there) (2.92.3–4).

Further,

If, in a dream, a king becomes a beggar, or a pauper the Indra of heaven, is there any gain or loss upon waking up? In a similar manner should one apperceive the phenomenal world. Thinking thus, one should not get into the trammels of anger, and should not blame others. Everyone is asleep due to the influence of *moha*, delusion, and is dreaming various dreams (2.92, 2.93.1).

Sri Ram is Brahman itself. He is unknowable, unperceivable, beginningless, nonpareil, devoid of transformation, and indivisible. He is that which the Vedas have been describing as '*neti-neti*, not this, not this' (2.93.4).

About maya, the cause of bondage, Tulsidas writes:

Me and mine, you and yours—*this* is maya, which has captivated all jivas. The senses and their objects, and that up to which the mind can reach, O brother, know all that to be maya. But this maya is of two kinds: one is *vidya*, the other *avidya*. Hear further the difference: The one (*avidya*) is evil and highly painful, due to whose control the jiva has fallen into the pit of samsara. The other (*vidya*) has in her control the virtues which orchestrate the universe; however, it is prompted by the Lord Himself—in it is not its own power (3.14.1–3).

Tulsidas urges us to repeat the name of God, because it is Ram's name that redeems, and not Sri Ram himself: 'Sri Ram redeemed only Shabari, Jatayu, and others, but the Name has raised sinners, countless in number' (1.24). '*Ram Ram ramu, Ram Ram ratu*; repeat and savour the Name';[15] '*ram-nam japu*; repeat Ram's name.'[16] Tulsidas even says: 'Let my skin be used to make the shoes of the one who utters the word "Ram" even by mistake.'[17]

Tulsidas has advised us to be firm in the journey to our goal. Swami Vivekananda, quoting Tulsidas, says: 'The elephant walks the market-place and a thousand curs bark at him; so the Sadhus have no

ill-feeling if worldly people slander them.'[18] And 'take the sweetness of all, sit with all, take the name of all, say yea, yea, but keep your seat firm' (3.64).

Tulsi's Importance

What is the importance of the bhakti movement in general and of Tulsidas in particular? Through his works Tulsidas set in train some important effects, pertinent to his time, without which Indian society would probably have gone into darker times. Tulsidas's influence can be recognized in four distinct areas:

Counteracting Occultism · At that time there were four major secretive cults that cultivated the practice of supernatural powers: the Vedic sacrificial, the Tantric, the Natha, and the Mahanubhava. It is natural that common people will equate religion with occultism. Tulsidas's teachings bailed out religion from this pitfall and made it plain and simple. He emphasized living a virtuous life and developing human perfection, as opposed to supernatural achievement.

Opposition to Left-hand Practices · With his devotion and teachings, Tulsidas provided an alternative to the cults that showed a proclivity for debauchery. Shakta cults used to practise the rite of *chakra-puja*, in which an equal number of men and women sit round in a circle and partake of the five 'm's: *madya*, wine, *mamsa*, meat, *matsya*, fish, *mudra*, cereals, and *maithuna*, sexual union. The Shaiva cults of the *kapalika*s and *kalamukha*s also followed licentious rituals and practices. The ideal of illicit love between Krishna and Radha might also have been reduced to immoral practices in the hands of unfit and incompetent persons, had an alternative not been provided. The reason for this downfall is that the inherently weak and indecisive human mind easily and unconsciously slips into permissive practices and is consumed by them. As opposed to this, Tulsidas placed before the people the ideal of chaste grihastha life.

Restoration of Faith · Muslim rule, with its royal patronage and compulsions, had shaken the confidence of the Hindus in their own religion and

culture. Tulsidas's works, especially the *Ramcharit-manas*, with its charming Chaupais, became so popular that they inspired every household. A brilliant piece of literature, it immediately captured the popular imagination and became a great force in holding together the fort of Sanatana Dharma. A verse by Abdur Rahim Khankhana, Akbar's minister, states: 'The pure *Rāmacharitamānasa* is like life's breath to the holy ones; it is the Veda to the Hindu, and verily the *Qur'an* itself to the Muslim.'[19] Grierson notes in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1903: 'Over the whole of the Gangetic valley this work [*Ramcharitmanas*] is better known than the Bible is in England' (ibid.).

Introduction of an Ideal to Emulate · A person directly described as a superhuman deity would surely fail to be a model for human beings to emulate—in such a case, people would 'worship' him rather than emulate him! Tulsidas presented a picture of human perfection, achievable by common people, through which one could uplift and divinize one's own character.

Tulsidas never became attracted to miracles or money. He was guileless but fearless and frank, innocent but outspoken and plain in speech. He did not preach any particularized doctrine, nor did he found a sect or school. Yet his pure life and enchanting, forceful, and touching poetry have cast a permanent spell on society. ∾

References

10. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 5.415.
11. For a detailed discussion on the differences between the two Ramayanas, see *Adhyātma Rāmāyana*, trans. Swami Tapasyananda (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1985), 369–76.
12. *Tulsidasa's Shri Ramacharitamanasa*, trans. R C Prasad (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), 722.
13. *Goswāmī Tulasīdāsa*, 27–52.
14. *Ramcharitmanas*, 1.116.3.
15. *Vinay-patrika*, 65.1.
16. *Barvai Ramayan*, 48 and *passim*; *Vairagya-sandipani*, 4 and 40.
17. *Vairagya-sandipani*, 37.
18. *Complete Works*, 7.135.
19. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, 4.398.

None except Him is the purveyor of livelihood.
    In Him lies our hope. He alone shall endure.
You alone are! You alone are!
Birds do not build granaries nor conserve water;
    they live on forest trees and in natural pools.
    The Lord provides for them.
You alone are! You alone are!
Nanak says, as is written on the forehead, so shall
    it be; He gives power, He takes it away.
You alone are! You alone are![34]   ∾

Notes and References

24. Guru Granth Sahib, 1429.
25. Mohinder Kaur Gill, *Adi Granth*, *Lok Rup* (Delhi: M P Prakashan, 2002), 30; translation mine.
26. Guru Granth Sahib, 134.
27. Anthony De Mello, SJ, *The Song of the Bird* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1996), 5.
28. T Burrow, 'Ancient and Modern Languages', in *A Cultural History of India*, 163.
29. *Punjabi Sahit da Itihas*, chapter 3.
30. Swami Vivekananda, in his Lahore lecture on the 'Common Bases of Hinduism', said: 'This [Punjab] is the land which is held to be the holiest even in the holy Āryāvarta; this is the Brahmāvarta. ... This is the land from whence arose that mighty aspiration after the spirit, ay, which in times to come, as history shows, is to deluge the world. This is the land where, like its mighty rivers, spiritual aspirations have arisen and joined their strength, till they travelled over the length and breadth of the world. ... Here it was that in later times the gentle Nānak preached his marvellous love for the world. Here it was that his broad heart was opened and his arms outstretched to embrace the whole world, not only of Hindus, but of Mohammedans too.' *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 3.366.
31. *Adi Granth*, *Lok Rup*, 9.
32. For details, see Dr Gopal Singh, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib di Sahitik Visheshta* (New Delhi: World Book Centre, 1987), chapter 7.
33. For an introduction to the life and poetry of Kabir and Guru Nanak in Hindi, see Pran Nath Pankaj, *Suno Bhai Sadho Kahat Kabir*, and *Sach Ki Bani Akhai Guru Nanak* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2001).
34. See Guru Granth Sahib, 143–4; translation mine.

REVIEWS
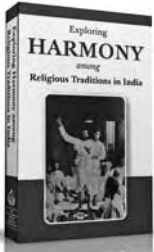
Exploring Harmony among Religious Traditions in India
Ramakrishna Mission
Institute of Culture

Gol Park, Kolkata 700 029. E-mail: *rmic@vsnl.com*. 2008. xii + 386 pp. Rs 150.

The book is a compilation of more than thirty papers read at a seminar organized by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture in 2007 on an area which is not only timely but imperatively so. And the range of areas covered is fairly comprehensive and uniformly interesting: 'From Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Sufism, Buddhism to Śaivism' as also 'Jainism, Judaism, Baha'i, as well as different facets of Vaiṣṇavism, the practice of yoga, *Siddha* and finally the Ramakrishna Order' (383).

While Swami Atmapriyananda offers a concise, comprehensive, and clear account of Hinduism, Swami Prabhananda makes a pertinent point often overlooked: 'In today's pluralistic societies, it is worthwhile to explore the extent to which the major religions would open the doors to the living experience of practitioners of religion' (4). It is this concern for live experience that distinguishes this seminar from, by and large, the usual cerebral deliberations which, though impressive and illuminating, are of little help in the face of mounting tensions—if not terrors—of fundamentalism.

Swami Bhajanananda, in his characteristically incisive and illuminating paper on 'Harmony of Religions vis-à-vis Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda', points out both the 'intrinsic' elements and 'the vested' political, social, and economic factors that vitiate attempts at inter-faith and intra-faith harmony. Strangely enough, as the Swami says, 'left to themselves, common people would live in peace with their neighbours whatever be their religion or faith' (245). But invariably, the evident harmony is at the mercy of political struggles for capturing and retaining power. The Ramakrishna tradition, he says, added 'universalism' to the existing religious attitudes, which is not a blurring of distinctions but a harmonizing through living and not merely preaching.

Professor J N Mohanty, in his keynote, takes a fresh look at the Great Master's affirmation *yata mat tata path*. *Tata path* means, he says, that religions 'are all paths towards something, towards a common goal' and yet 'it is not clear whether there is such a common goal' (11). In short, there could be common elements, but that there is a common goal is not always apparent. Therefore, we require to take note of what postmodernism has brought into our view: 'that the search for unity is very misleading, that besides the vertical unity, there is a transversal, horizontal unity. It is unity amongst differents' (13).

Among other papers, those on Judaism in the twenty-first century—especially the section on Judaism and spirituality—on Catholic perspectives, and the ones on Islam and Jainism make very fruitful reading. But the essay by Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami is a unique revelation: he presents the extraordinary web of dialogue that existed between the Vaishnava tradition of Vrindaban and the Mughal rulers. Dr Gowsami traces, in a gentle and graceful way, the many strands that made two communities live and support concretely the faith of the other. He demonstrates how *samvada* and not *vada* existed at that time and continues to be vibrant even today, in spite of virulent politicization of faiths. In short, this essay *shows* harmony in action.

Swami Smarananananda, a vice president of the Ramakrishna Order, eloquently expresses the spirit of the seminar: 'Love, above all, conquers everything. The basis of all religions is this love, focusing on the same God, same *Ātman* dwelling in all beings—*sarvasya cāham hṛdi sanniviṣṭaḥ*. Even dualistic religions have to admit that God belongs to all' (9).

The volume is an invaluable contribution to the area of spiritual harmony. We are grateful to Swami Sarvabhutananda and his associates for giving this hardbound book at a moderate price.

Dr M Sivaramkrishna
Former Head, Department of English
Osmania University, Hyderabad

REPORTS

Left: Dedication of Vivekananda Rock Memorial by Swamis Yuktatmananda (right) and Vidananda. Right: Bronze plaque in front of Vivekananda Cottage

Memorial

On 31 July 2009 **Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center**, **New York**, with the cooperation of New York State authorities, dedicated a memorial on a rock located within Wellesley Island State Park, New York, where Swami Vivekananda had sat in deep meditation on 7 August 1895, the last day of his stay at Thousand Island Park, Wellesley Island. About 200 persons, including monks, devotees, and dignitaries participated in the programme. The memorial consists of a large bronze plaque bearing the likeness of Swamiji and a description of the historic event. On this auspicious occasion, a similar bronze plaque was also dedicated in front of the Vivekananda Cottage, Thousand Island Park, where Swamiji had spent seven weeks, in the summer of 1895, imparting teachings to a number of earnest disciples. The inscription on the cottage plaque bears a brief description of the cottage and its significance.

News from Branch Centres

Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated a newly built administrative-cum-academic building of the Faculty Centre for Integrated Rural Development and Management of the **Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University** at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama**, **Narendrapur**, on 1 August. Besides, on 3 August he presided over the golden jubilee celebrations of the centre and gave a benedictory address in the meeting organized for the occasion.

Srimat Swami Gitanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated a new monks' quarters at **Ramakrishna Math**, **Barasat**, on 5 August.

Relief

Cyclone Aila Relief · During July 2009 centres in West Bengal distributed several items among the victims of the Aila Cyclone. **Baranagar Mission**: 400 saris, 3,424 textbooks, and 1,249 school uniforms to 2,293 victims and students of 3 villages in Sandeshkhali block of North 24-Parganas district. **Belgharia**: 777 saris, 754 dhotis, 800 mosquito nets, and 4,148 books to 2,271 persons of 8 villages in Sandeshkhali I and Gosaba blocks of North and South 24-Parganas districts. **Rahara**: 1,540 kg rice, 380 kg dal, 22 kg chhatu, 17 kg biscuits, 10 kg salt, 3 kg milk powder, 518 l mineral water, 770 saris, 1,334 mosquito nets, 3 bales of used garments, 264 candles, 288 matchboxes, and 125 kg bleaching powder to about 1,350 families of 6 villages in Sandeshkhali II and Gosaba blocks of North and South 24-Parganas districts. Besides, the centre treated 2,044 patients. **Saradapitha**: 1,500 kg rice, 150 kg dal, 37 kg biscuits, 4 kg milk powder, 432 candles, 300 mosquito nets, 157 saris, 20 bales of used garments, 100 steel plates, 100 steel bowls, 400 notebooks, 400 pencils, and 400 erasers to 700 families of 2 villages in Hingalganj and Sandeshkhali blocks of North 24-Parganas district. The centre also treated some patients. **Taki**: 4,500 kg chira, 296 kg gur, 40 kg sugar, 405 kg biscuits, 10,680 kg rice, 1,000 kg dal, 600 kg potatoes, 300 kg salt, 122 kg milk powder, 2,000 l drinking water, 188,000 halogen tablets, 480 candles, 1,225 kg bleaching powder, and 49 bales of used garments to 10,533 families of 21 villages in North 24-Parganas district.

Distress Relief · The following centres distributed various items to the needy in their respective areas. **Belgaum**: 375 kg rice, 375 kg flour, 75 kg dal, and 75 kg edible oil; **Belgharia**: 322 saris, 351 dhotis, 185 shirts, 174 pants, and 703 children's garments; **Cooch Behar**: 5 van rickshaws; **Karimganj**: 306 mosquito nets; **Nagpur**: 610 school uniforms, 1,600 notebooks, 575 pens, and 100 geometry boxes; **Puri Math**: 116 packets of baby food, 244 school bags, and an equal number of school uniforms, Dettol bottles, soap bars, toothbrushes, tubes of toothpaste, and tongue cleaners. ✍

BOOKS BY
SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

SUPPORT THIS TEMPLE OF LEARNING!

'Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University' is the actualization of the vision of Swami Vivekananda. Started in 2005, this University is unique in (i) the emphasis on certain 'thrust areas' which are scarcely given attention in other universities in India, (ii) the multi-campus character of the University—a wide network of specialized faculty centres in located in different parts of India (iii) the inculcation of higher human values in all the courses of the University.

Presently, following are the 'thrust areas': (1) Disability Management and Special Education; (2) Integrated Rural Development including Tribal Development; (3) Indian Cultural and Spiritual Heritage and Value Education; (4) Fundamental sciences—integrated teaching and research; (5) Disaster Management including relief and rehabilitation.

We have already been able start courses in the first four of the above areas through our centres at Coimbatore, (Tamil Nadu), Narendrapur (West Bengal), Ranchi (Jharkhand), Belur (West Bengal) and Swami Vivekananda's Ancestral House (Kolkata, West Bengal). The following courses and programmes are being offered at present:

(i) B.Ed., M.Ed., M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes in Disability Management and Special Education (Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment and Mental Retardation);

(ii) Courses in 'General & Adapted Physical Education and Yoga' including Special Olympics meant especially for mentally retarded children—the first of its kind in Asia by any University;

(iii) M.Sc. courses in Integrated Rural Development and Management (IRDM), and Integrated Rural and Tribal Development (IRTD);

(iv) Postgraduate Diploma course in Agro-based Bio-technology;

(v) Diploma courses in 'Integrated Self-Development', Bhagavad-Gita: Classical and Modern Interpretation, and Essentials of Indian Spiritual Heritage;

(vi) Integrated M.A. course in Sanskrit, fully in Sanskrit medium, in gurukula spirit with free food and accommodation; M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes in Sanskrit Studies;

(vii) M.Phil. and Ph.D. in Bengali Literature and Language Studies, doctoral and post-doctoral programmes in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda philosophy and thought, Translation Studies, and Consciousness Studies;

(viii) and M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Pure Mathematics and Theoretical Computer Science, M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes in Theoretical Physics.

We urgently need to create a sizeable corpus fund of at least 25 crore in the next couple of years, to strengthen the foundations of the University and make it grow further. We therefore appeal to all friends, devotees, followers, well-wishers, and admirers to contribute generously for building up such a corpus fund. Donors to the University will enjoy 100% exemption from Income Tax under a special provision—Section 80G, subsection 2(a)(iii) of the Income Tax Act, 1961, as notified by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

Swami Atmapriyananda, Vice Chancellor

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIVEKANANDA UNIVERSITY (Declared by Government of India under Section 3 of UGC Act)
PO Belur Math, Dist Howrah, West Bengal 711 202, India, Phone: (033) 2654 9999 / 2654 3503; Fax: (033) 2654 4640
Email: rkmvubelur@gmail.com; vivekananda.university@gmail.com

CONTRIBUTE TO THE PRABUDDHA BHARATA CORPUS FUND!

Contribute your mite to the Prabuddha Bharata Corpus Fund and actively participate in this venture to propagate Indian culture, values, philosophy, and spirituality. Could there be a better way to show your appreciation?

You can send your contributions by cheque or drafts favouring 'Prabuddha Bharata' to 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700014, India or make your donations online at www.advaitaashrama.org. All donations are exempt from Income tax u/s 80G.

Name of the Donor:	Amount
2. Sri P.C. Gurnani, New Delhi	Rs. 1,100/-
3. Sri Subir Kumar Pradhan, Delhi	Rs. 5,000/-